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EUROPE
& PACIFIC

WEEKEND EDITION



NBA

Forget Big Threes; dynamic duos are all the rage among title contenders

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Volume 78, No. 132 ©SS 2019

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2019

\$1.00

平成32年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可
発行所 条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価￥100

Seismic shift

Hasty US pullback from Syria could resonate beyond Middle East



BY LIZ SLY

The Washington Post

BEIRUT — The blow to America's standing in the Middle East was sudden and unexpectedly swift. Within the space of a few hours, advances by Turkish troops in Syria this week had compelled the U.S. military's Syrian Kurdish allies to switch sides, unraveled years of U.S. Syria policy and recalibrated the balance of power in the Middle East.

As Russian and Syrian troops roll into vacated towns and U.S. bases, the winners are counting the spoils.

The withdrawal delivered a huge victory to Syrian President Bashar Assad, who won back control of an area roughly amounting to a third of the country almost overnight. It affirmed Moscow as the arbiter of Syria's fate and the rising power in the Middle East. It sent another signal to Iran that Washington has no appetite for the kind of confrontation that its rhetoric suggests and that Iran's expanded influence in Syria is now likely to go unchallenged.

It sent a message to the wider world that the U.S. is in the process of a disengagement that could resonate beyond the Middle East, said Hussein Ibish of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

"There's a sense that the long goodbye has begun and that the long goodbye from the Middle East could become a long goodbye from Asia and everywhere else," he said.

SEE SHIFT ON PAGE 6

A U.S. military convoy moves outside Qamishli, Syria, on Saturday.

ALICE MARTINS
For The Washington Post

■ US makes plans to battle ISIS in Syria from afar

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Pence: Turkey agrees to cease-fire so Kurds can withdraw » Page 6

UN report: Afghan war casualties at highest level in decade

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — More Afghans were killed or injured in the past three months than in any comparable period in the past decade, the United Nations said in a report released Thursday, blaming the Taliban for most of the deaths.

The deaths and injuries in Afghanistan came during accelerated U.S.-Taliban peace talks, which collapsed in September after the Taliban

1,174

Afghan civilians killed from July to September, according to a report released Thursday. More than 3,100 were injured, according to the report.

claimed an attack that killed a U.S. soldier.

From July to September, 1,174 civilians were killed and more than 3,100 were injured, the report said. The tally for the quarter was the highest since the U.N. began tracking civilian deaths in Afghanistan 10 years ago.

Over 40% of this year's civilian casualties were women and children, the report said.

"The impact of Afghanistan's conflict on civilians is appalling; every verified number is a person, someone's relative — mother, father,

daughter, son," said Fiona Frazer, UNAMA's human rights chief.

This quarter's rise in civilian casualties was blamed mainly on bomb attacks carried out by the Taliban, followed by ground engagements and aerial attacks, the report said.

During the first nine months of 2019, the Taliban and Islamic State were responsible for more than 60% of civilian deaths and injuries, while

SEE REPORT ON PAGE 2

WAR ON TERRORISM

A memorial for Air Force Staff Sgt. Dylan Elchin is displayed during a service in Moon Township, Pa., in December. The House has approved a bill to rename a post office in Hookstown, Pa., in honor of Elchin.

JOSEPH PICK
U.S. Air Force



House approves bill to rename Pa. post office after fallen airman

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A post office in western Pennsylvania is on track to be renamed after an airman who was killed in Afghanistan last year.

The House on Wednesday approved a bill to designate the Hookstown facility as the Staff Sgt. Dylan Elchin Post Office Building.

The bill must now be approved by the Senate and President Donald Trump for the renaming to be official.

Elchin and two other American servicemen were killed in November by a roadside bomb in Ghazni province, in an attack claimed by the Taliban.

"Staff Sergeant Elchin served our country valiantly," said Rep. Conor Lamb, a Marine veteran,



Elchin

who teared up as he introduced the bill on the House floor. "At his funeral last year, we heard how throughout all the difficult conditions

that Staff Sergeant Elchin experienced in Afghanistan, he was always cheerful, always enthusiastic and always someone who inspired his fellow airmen no matter what."

Elchin was a combat controller assigned to the 26th Special Tactics Squadron at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. Combat controllers work with Army Special Forces teams and are among the

Air Force's elite, trained in air traffic control, parachuting, diving and rappelling.

The 25-year-old was on his first deployment and was planning to marry his fiancee when he returned to the United States.

Hookstown, where Elchin grew up, is about 35 miles west of Pittsburgh, near the borders of Ohio and West Virginia.

In May, a post office in North Kingston, R.I., was named in honor of Army Capt. Matthew J. August, who was killed by a roadside bomb in Khalidiyah, Iraq, in 2004. In April, a post office in Orange, Calif., was renamed after Army Spc. Trevor A. Win'E, who was killed when his convoy came under attack in Tikrit, Iraq, in 2004.

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Report: USFOR-A criticizes UN's methods for anti-drug production airstrikes' toll

FROM FRONT PAGE

pro-government forces were blamed for just over a quarter of the casualties, the report said. Some casualties were not attributed to either side.

Attacks by extremist groups also caused more civilian deaths in the third quarter than operations by pro-government forces, the report said.

Airstrikes, mostly conducted by American forces, still caused nearly a quarter of all civilian deaths in Afghanistan in 2019, the report said.

The latest civilian casualty figures were released just days after the 18th anniversary of the war. Earlier in the week, the U.N. released a separate report condemning the Taliban for using violence and intimidation to disrupt Afghanistan's Sept. 28 presidential election.

At least 85 civilians were killed and over 370 injured in attacks carried out mainly by the Taliban on Election Day and during the campaign period, the U.N. said.

The threat of violence might have contributed to low voter turnout, which could lead some to question the polls' legitimacy, government officials and analysts have said.

After talks between American and Taliban officials collapsed last month, President Donald Trump vowed "to hit our enemy harder" than ever before, raising fears among some Afghans that even more civilians would suffer

in the country's chronic violence.

In another report released last week, the U.N. said American airstrikes targeting drug production facilities in western Afghanistan in May left nearly 40 civilians dead or injured.

The U.N. said the airstrikes were unlawful because the facilities that were hit were civilian targets under international law.

United States Forces-Afghanistan denied the claims of illegality and that the strikes caused casualties.

"USFOR-A is deeply concerned by UNAMA's methods and findings," command spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett said on Twitter shortly after the report was released, using an acronym for the U.N.'s mission in Afghanistan. "Sources with limited information, conflicted motives and violent agendas are not credible."

The two sides have long disagreed over civilian casualty numbers.

The U.S. military primarily relies on overhead surveillance to determine whether civilians were killed or injured by its strikes, while the U.N. uses on-the-ground fact-finding teams to interview witnesses. Critics of the military's method say it is sometimes impossible to identify casualties without being on the ground.

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MILITARY

Virtual reality helps speed pilot training

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

The first six new Air Force helicopter pilots to train on virtual reality flight simulators recently pinned on their wings at the Army's Fort Rucker, Ala.

Last week, the pilots graduated a redesigned course that prepared them to fly the UH-1N Huey, HH-60G Pave Hawk and the CV-22 Osprey six weeks earlier than the 28-week traditional pilot training program run by the 23rd Flying Training Squadron.

Called Rotary Wing Next, the program trims actual cockpit flying by nearly 18 hours and adds 38 hours of VR simulator flights to 20 hours of traditional simulator training.

Students spend 23½ hours in VR before climbing into an aircraft, where they can expect to fly 67.3 hours during the course. Capt. Matt Strick, Innovation Flight commander, told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

By reducing the course length and incorporating new technology, the Air Force saves around \$60,000 per student compared with the previous course, squadron commander Lt. Col. Jake Brittingham said by phone Wednesday.

The technology is making better use of instructor and student time, he said.

"Where we really made our money was in the virtual reality sims," Strick said. "You can really make time stand still. You can work on crew communications, checklists and start-up procedures before even getting in the cockpit. We teach as [students] are doing the virtual reality flights."

Eventually, Rotary Wing Next is expected to produce new Air Force helicopter pilots in as few as 14 weeks.

Last year, Maj. Gen. Patrick Doherty, then the 19th Air Force commander, tasked Brittingham and other members of the 58th Special Operations Wing at Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M., to find a more efficient way to train helicopter pilots to meet the growing needs of the special operations



U.S. Air Force photos

Above: Air Force student pilots work with an instructor from the 23rd Flying Training Squadron during a virtual reality simulator sortie earlier this month at Fort Rucker, Ala. Below: Air Force officers pose with a TH-1H helicopter at Fort Rucker, Ala., after graduating from a pilot training program that tested virtual reality simulators and a new, shorter curriculum.



units and the new platforms they will be fielding, Brittingham said.

For example, the Air Force

plans to replace the Pave Hawk, its version of the Black Hawk helicopter, with the HH-60W combat rescue helicopter as early as

2021, according to manufacturer Lockheed Martin's website.

Meanwhile, plans are to eventually replace the 40-year-old Huey, which the Air Force uses to defend missile fields, with the MH-139, built by Boeing.

Traditionally, the Air Force training squadron at Fort Rucker produces around 60 rotary-wing pilots a year, Brittingham said. The squadron was asked to increase its training output to 120 pilots a year by 2023–25, he said.

In fiscal year 2019, the squadron trained 74 pilots and is on course to train 85 in fiscal year 2020.

The Air Force implemented the idea for virtual simulators for helicopter training from its experimental Pilot Training Next program at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas, a relatively new program to train fixed-wing pilots to fly everything from the

F-35 Lightning II strike fighter to heavy lifters like the C-5 Galaxy.

That program reduced the time needed to train fully qualified pilots from one year to six months. It graduated its first class of pilots in July 2018 and another in August.

Air Force helicopter pilots begin their training in the fixed-wing T-6 Texan II for six months. They then move into rotary-wing training, where they first learn the basics of flight with vertical lift — takeoffs, landings and how to hover, Brittingham said.

The students then learn to fly the helicopter in tactical situations — low-level flying, landing and taking off on unprepared surfaces, flying in formation and with night-vision goggles.

The recent graduates' first day of class was May 7, and on May 8 they had their first VR flight, Brittingham said.

By the time the students climbed into an actual helicopter they knew how to talk as a crew, were familiar with the aircraft and had dealt with simulated problems in VR, which means instructors are just fine-tuning instead of starting from scratch, Strick said.

The six new pilots will be divided evenly among the three rotary-wing communities in the Air Force for follow-on training.

They are expected to send feedback back to Rotary Wing Next to Fort Rucker. The training squadron plans to start another class in eight months, after the VR simulators receive updated software.

The software update will replace the Bell 412 utility helicopter simulation with the TH-1H primary trainer that is flown in training. The TH-1H is basically a Huey airframe with an updated cockpit like those in the helicopters the trainees will eventually fly.

Additionally, now that the first class of students has completed the course, all students in the school's traditional training course will get 20 hours of virtual reality simulator time, Strick said.

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Coast Guard cutter joins drills near South China Sea islands

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Coast Guard is taking part in annual training near contentious South China Sea islands involving the U.S. and Philippine navies and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.

The exercise — Maritime Training Activity Sama Sama — is underway this week on and around Palawan, the Philippines island closest to the Spratly Islands, southwest of Manila, a Navy statement said.

China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia dispute the ownership of the approximately 100 islands and reefs in the Spratly chain. Military forces from those

countries occupy about 45 of the islands, according to the CIA World Factbook.

China has built up and militarized seven of the Spratlys, according to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative. The region is rich in fishing grounds and untapped oil and gas deposits, the CIA factbook says.

During the exercise, the nations will practice shore and sea capabilities, including force protection, explosive ordnance disposal and anti-air, surface warfare and vessel-of-interest tracking.

The Navy did not say when the drills would end. The service by policy does not discuss future ship movements.

The inclusion of the cutter Stratton continues the Coast Guard's presence in the western Pacific this year. The Stratton in

June relieved the cutter Bertholf, which made history this past spring when it became the first U.S. cutter to sail through the Taiwan Strait.

The Bertholf also made an April port visit to Hong Kong, the Coast Guard's first to the Chinese territory in 17 years.

Coast Guard commandant Adm. Karl Schultz will come to Manila next week "for a series of engagements," the Philippine Daily Inquirer reported Wednesday.

This is the first time Japan has participated in the U.S.-Philippine event. The JMSDF has taken part in other multilateral exercises for the first time this year, including its first involvement in Talisman Sabre off the eastern coast of Australia in July.

Navy Rear Adm. Joey Tynch, commander of Logistics Group Western Pacific, said in the statement that the Sama Sama exercise "gives us a great chance to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our friends, partners, and allies."

"We train together, so that together we can face threats to maritime security," he said.

Participating Navy vessels include the littoral combat ship USS Montgomery; dock landing ship USS Germantown; expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Mililani; salvage ship USNS Salvor; and a P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft, according to the statement.

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MILITARY

Marines correct another Iwo Jima ID

Historians, FBI help Corps with iconic photo

BY HANNAH KNOWLES
The Washington Post

At first, the men hoisting one of the first American flags on Japanese soil were anonymous symbols of the war effort—backs turned, faces obscured in the Associated Press photograph that would win a Pulitzer, signal triumph amid massive casualties and help finance World War II.

"Our country needed a pick-me-up," said Dustin Spence, a Sacramento filmmaker and historian who has studied the photo for years. "This flag-raising picture did that."

Then President Franklin D. Roosevelt said he wanted to bring the six Marines pictured to Washington.

"That's when we kind of opened up this Pandora's box," Spence told *The Washington Post*.

It would take nearly 75 years to get the names right.

This month, the Marine Corps confirmed that it has long misidentified one of the men in Rosenthal's iconic picture from the island of Iwo Jima, after Spence and other historians submitted a PowerPoint of evidence.

It wasn't the first error. Three years ago, the Marines acknowledged another mistake, and false IDs have plagued a second image from the Feb. 23, 1945 flag-raising on Japan's Mount Suribachi too.

Both the Marines and the FBI's Digital Evidence Laboratory worked to confirm the latest "opportunity to expand on the historical record," the Marine Corps told NBC News in a statement—the revelation that Cpl. Harold "Pie" Keller rather than Pfc. Rene Gagnon is pictured in Rosenthal's shot.

"Regardless of who was in the photograph, each and every Marine who set foot on Iwo Jima, or supported the effort from the sea and air around the island is, and always will be, a part of our Corps' cherished history," the Marines said. "In the words of General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, 'they are all heroes.'"

The Marines did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

For Spence, the Marines' admission capped a personal project that's spanned half the 35-year-old life. Fascinated by World War II after growing up on his grandfather's stories of piloting in the Pacific, Spence spent his college years interviewing veterans. One of those veterans told him a story about a flag-raising picture from Iwo Jima that all the books got wrong.

Two flag-raisings were memorialized on Iwo Jima on Feb. 23; U.S. forces swapped in a bigger



JOE ROSENTHAL/AP

Marines hoist a U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima volcano in 1945. The Marines have corrected the identification of one of the men in the photo, the second correction in three years.



Stars and Stripes

Rene Gagnon points to an image of the Iwo Jima flag-raising during a visit to Tokyo.

flag before Rosenthal's shot.

Spence started scouting out misconceptions about the first, lesser-known photo before moving on to the Rosenthal image that plastered newspapers in 1945. He teamed up with two other historians who had been scrutinizing the pictures, Steven Foley and Brent Westemeyer.

In May 2016, the Marine Corps announced it was revisiting the lore around the famous Associated Press photo, thanks to Spence and others' digging. Within a month, a panel headed by a retired general had put its weight behind the historians' findings.

Navy Pharmacist's Mate 2nd Class John Bradley was, in fact, Marine private Harold Schultz. Bradley was actually part of the first, smaller flag-raising, the panel affirmed.

Westemeyer had a "hunch" that one man was still wrongly identified, Spence recalled. But they needed proof.

Those lingering questions sent Spence to Army archives in Carl-

isle, Pa., where he sifted through other, little-known pictures from that day on Iwo Jima—snapped by photographers who never got Rosenthal's fame. It was like a puzzle, he said. He would match a snippet of camouflage helmet from Rosenthal's image to a different picture, then trace another detail to yet another picture, until he found a clearly visible face.

The face he landed on seemed to belong to Harold Keller. Looking for more confirmation, Spence said, he tracked down Keller's daughter, Kay Maurer.

Maurer showed him a trunk of keepsakes her parents saved from the war era, full of newsclipplings using words like "bloodbath" and "meat-grinder" to describe the brutal war being waged in the Pacific, Spence said. Among the papers were articles about the first flag-raising.

Spence has spoken with many veterans over the years, he said, but Keller stood out. A Purple Heart recipient and Marine Raider, Keller was what Spence

calls "the Navy SEAL of World War II," a man highly trained and prepared to survive behind enemy lines. Keller found out that he'd fought in major clashes like the Battle of Midway and lived through a bullet in the neck.

The only one of the six Marines in Rosenthal's photo to have children, Keller would name his son after a friend mortally wounded at the bottom of Mount Suribachi, Spence said.

News that Keller was pictured in the famous photo has reportedly caught Keller's family off guard.

"He never spoke about any of this when we were growing up," his daughter Maurer, 70, told NBC News. "We knew he fought in the war, we knew he was wounded in the shoulder at one point ... But he didn't tell us he helped raise the flag on Mount Suribachi."

Hanging on the living room wall, though, was another Rosenthal picture, Maurer told the news station. It showed Marines in front of a flag.

An obituary indicates that Keller died in 1979.

Otherwise, Spence said, he's asked why it matters who's in Rosenthal's image. After all, the second flag-raising shot seems composed to discourage identification.

"It's not supposed to be named individuals," Spence speculated. "You're supposed to see Marines, or any type of person, coming together to raise something, raise a flag that symbolizes unity."

Despite the Rosenthal photo's track record, Spence believes the Marines finally have the right names.

"I feel the journey is over," he said.

Airman found dead in home

BY NEIL FOTRE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A 24-year-old airman stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D., was found dead Monday at his off-post home, service officials confirmed.

Senior Airman William Horton was assigned to the 28th Bomb Wing as a B-1 journeyman with the 28th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, according to service officials. Horton joined the Air Force in 2015 and has been awarded the Air Force Achievement medal.

"The death of Senior Airman William Horton is a tragic loss for the entire Raider family," said Col. David Doss, commander of the 28th Bomb Wing whose servicemen known as Raiders. "My sincerest condolences go out to his family, friends and coworkers who are grieving during this challenging time."

Service officials said Wednesday that Horton's death is under investigation and it is unknown whether foul play was a factor.

Ellsworth Air Force Base is about 10 miles northeast of Rapid City in South Dakota. The base is home to the 28th Bomb Wing, one of the Air Force's two B-1B Lancer wings. The base has a military population of about 8,000 servicemen.

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NATION

Pence says Turkey agrees to cease-fire

By ZEKE MILLER
AND ROBERT BURNS

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — The U.S. and Turkey agreed Thursday to a five-day cease-fire in the Turks' attacks on Kurdish fighters in northern Syria to allow the Kurds to withdraw to roughly 20 miles away from the Turkish border.

The arrangement appeared to be a significant embrace of Turkey's position in the weeklong conflict.

After more than four hours of negotiations with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said the purpose of his high-level mission was to end the bloodshed caused by Turkey's invasion of Syria. He remained silent on whether the agreement amounted to a second abandonment of America's former Kurdish allies in the fight against the Islamic State.

Turkish troops and Turkish-backed Syrian fighters launched their offensive against Kurdish forces in northern Syria a week ago, two days after Trump suddenly announced he was withdrawing the U.S. from the area.

Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lauded the deal as a significant achievement, and Trump declared it "a great day for civilization."

But the agreement essentially gives the Turks what they had



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Vice President Mike Pence and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan negotiated for more than four hours Thursday, after which Pence announced Turkey's acceptance of a cease-fire agreement.

sought to achieve with their military operation in the first place. After the Kurdish forces are cleared from the safe zone, Turkey has committed to a permanent cease-fire but is under no obligation to withdraw its troops. In addition, the deal gives Turkey relief from sanctions the administration had imposed and threatened to impose since the invasion began, meaning there will be no penalty for the operation.

Erdogan had stated on Wednes-

day that he would be undeterred by the sanctions. He said the fighting would end only if Kurdish fighters abandoned their weapons and retreated from positions near the Turkish border.

Kurdish forces were not party to the agreement, and it was not immediately clear whether they would comply. Before the talks, the Kurds indicated they would object to any agreement along the lines of what was announced by Pence. But Pence maintained that

the U.S. had obtained "repeated assurances from them that they'll be moving out."

Ankara has long argued the Kurdish fighters are nothing more than an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which has waged a guerrilla campaign inside Turkey since the 1980s and which Turkey, as well as the U.S. and European Union, designate as a terrorist organization.

Trump's withdrawal of U.S.

Shift: Many in the region see long erosion of trust that started with Obama

FROM FRONT PAGE

Images shared on social media underscored the indignity of the retreat. Departing U.S. troops in sophisticated armored vehicles passed Syrian army soldiers riding in open-top trucks on a desert highway. An embedded Russian journalist took selfies on the abandoned U.S. base in Manbij, where U.S. forces had fought alongside their Kurdish allies to drive out Islamic State in 2015.

"Only yesterday they were here, and now we are here," said the journalist, panning the camera around the intact infrastructure, including a radio tower and a button-powered traffic-control gate that he showed was still functioning.

"Let's see how they lived and what they ate," he said, before ducking into one of the tents and filming the soldiers' discarded snacks.

On Arab news channels, coverage switched from footage of jubilant Syrian troops to scenes of Russian President Vladimir Putin's lavish receptions from the monarchs of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Washington's most vital Arab allies in the Persian Gulf. The visits had been long planned, but the timing gave them the feel of a victory lap.

"This has left a bad taste for all of America's friends and allies in the region, not only among the Kurds," said a former regional

minister who spoke on the condition of anonymity in order not to embarrass his government, an American ally. "Many will now be looking for new friends. The Russians don't abandon their allies. They fight for them. And so do the Iranians."

It was the manner of the withdrawal, hastily called amid chaos on the battlefield as Turkish forces pushed deep into Syria, that gave the event such impact in the region, analysts said. Few had anticipated that the most advanced military in the world would make such a scrambled and hasty departure, even after President Donald Trump signaled that he would not endorse a war on behalf of the Kurds against a U.S.-NATO ally.

Less than 48 hours before the withdrawal announcement, the top U.S. military commander, Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley, had given assurances that the troops would remain indefinitely, standing by their Kurdish partners to continue to hunt down ISIS.

But the Turks' capture Sunday of a key highway that served as the U.S. troops' main supply line revealed the fragility of a mission that had narrowly focused on the ISIS fight while neglecting regional dynamics, including the depth of Turkish animosity to the Kurdish militia with which the U.S. had teamed.

For many in the region, Trump's

abandonment of Syria caps a long erosion of trust that began under the administration of President Barack Obama. His decision not to stand by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who was toppled during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, is frequently contrasted with Russia's unwavering support for Assad after he faced popular unrest just a few weeks later, Arab officials say.

Obama's retreat from his "red line" ultimatum on the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government, after hundreds died in an attack outside Damascus in 2013, further called into question Washington's credibility, they say. His nuclear deal with Iran, which eased economic sanctions in return for restrictions on its nuclear activities, was seen by some as a capitulation to Iran and a betrayal of U.S. allies in the Middle East who were not consulted and were more concerned about Iran's pursuit of ballistic missiles and regional expansionism.

Trump's election to the presidency was welcomed by the United States' closest allies as a chance to reset the clock, but he, too, has disappointed, with his unpredictability and seemingly erratic decision-making. His decision not to confront Iran after it shot down an American drone in June jolted Gulf Arab leaders, who began to wonder whether U.S. security guarantees could be counted on in the event

of a real crisis with Iran.

Americans cannot complain about any loss of influence in the region as a result of their actions, said Mohammed al-Sulami, writing in the Saudi Arabian Arab News outlet on Wednesday.

"Washington actively opted for this policy, having chosen a strategy of withdrawal and retrenchment," he wrote. "The U.S. has no right to condemn the region's countries if they choose to forge relations with other powers to protect their interests."

The abrupt departure from northeastern Syria, Ibis said, has further shredded any U.S. credibility that had survived the disengagement of the Obama era and the capriciousness of the Trump one. The U.S. remains overwhelmingly the dominant military power in the Middle East, with about 50,000 troops deployed in the region and a level of technological superiority that will ensure that allies covet American weapons and support for years.

But friends and enemies alike are starting to suspect that Trump's unpredictability is less a cause than a consequence of a broader American reluctance to engage with the world, Ibis said. He dates that to the trauma of the bloody, costly and ultimately unsatisfying wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"People are asking: Could the United States not only be an unreliable power, but could it actually

troops has been widely condemned, including by Republican officials not directly associated with his administration. Republicans and Democrats in the House, bitterly divided over the Trump impeachment inquiry, banded together Wednesday for an overwhelming 354-60 denunciation of the U.S. troop withdrawal.

Trump has denied that his action provided a "green light" for Turkey to move against the long-time U.S. battlefield partners or that he was opening the way for a revival of the Islamic State group and raising worldwide doubts about U.S. faithfulness to its allies.

The White House released a letter on Wednesday in which Trump warned Erdogan that the sanctions could destroy his economy and that the world "will look upon you forever as the devil if good things don't happen. Don't be a tough guy. Don't be a fool!"

On Wednesday, Trump also spoke dismissively of the crisis, declaring the U.S. has no stake in defending Kurdish fighters who died by the thousands as America's partners against Islamic State extremists. In fact, he suggested the Kurdish group might be a greater terror threat than IS, and he welcomed the efforts of Russia and the Syrian government to fill the void left after he ordered the removal of nearly all U.S. troops from Syria.

"Not because it lacks the capability but because it lacks the will."

There was therefore a sense of inevitability to the sudden American departure from Syria, analysts said. Washington appears to have underestimated Turkey's determination to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish statelet on its border and overestimated the limited leverage offered by the presence of 1,000 U.S. troops.

The small U.S. presence in Syria had big intentions but limited means. The goal, as articulated by State Department officials, was for the troops to remain there to stamp out the remnants of the Islamic State and to provide leverage in seeking a Syrian peace settlement that would impose restraints on Assad's power, safeguard Kurdish interests and limit Iran's influence.

The Kurds also had overestimated their clout with an American president who frequently asserts his determination to disentangle the United States from Middle East wars, said Hilal Khashan, professor of political science at the American University of Beirut.

"The Kurds got carried away with their expectations and believed the U.S. would behave differently to all the foreign powers over the past 150 years," he said. "They discovered that the U.S. was not different."

NATION

Pentagon revises campaign against ISIS

By MISSY RYAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — U.S. officials acknowledged this week the difficulty of preventing an Islamic State resurgence in Syria once the bulk of American forces withdraw, as the military scrambles to assemble a plan for battling the militants from afar.

The rush to revise the campaign blueprint comes as the Pentagon moves to ensure that U.S. troops aren't swept up in a Turkish military operation in northern Syria, which has unleashed chaos in what was a relatively stable area and handed a major advantage to Syrian President Bashar Assad and his chief military backer, Russia.

The fast-moving events of the past week follow President Donald Trump's sudden decision to remove U.S. forces from northern Syria ahead of Ankara's planned offensive against U.S.-aligned Kurdish forces, who helped drive out the Islamic State. The Pentagon had hoped to keep a small number of troops in the area to contain what it says is a still-potent militant threat.

The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, stressed that the planning has not reached its final stages. They said the discussions centered on arrangements that would permit the United States to continue some level of air attacks and surveillance from outside Syria, relying in part on an expanded footprint in Jordan and transferring Special Operations forces to Iraq.

Officials are updating proposals generated after Trump, in another abrupt decision last December reflecting his desire to wind down America's insurgent wars, announced he would withdraw U.S. forces. He later backed away from an immediate exit.

Critics say Trump's reversal this month on the U.S. alliance with the Kurdish forces, and the latest upheaval in Syria, undermines American influence in the Middle East and illustrates Trump's disregard for U.S. partners.

Now, as the Pentagon presses ahead with plans to remove all but a small contingent of the 1,000 American servicemembers from Syria by the end of the month, officials said a remote campaign would face new challenges.

"It's a lot more complicated having to do this over the horizon," a U.S. official said, using a term for military operations conducted from outside a targeted country. Ensuring that the militants don't regroup, the official said, would now be "a lot harder."

The challenges start with obtaining adequate intelligence about Islamic State activities now that the partnership with the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is in danger of shattering.

After U.S. troops began to withdraw this week, the SDF, which Ankara considers part of a ter-



Syrian troops celebrate and hold the Syrian national flag in the city of Kobani, Syria, on Thursday.

Kurdish commander: Trump OK'd deal with Moscow and Damascus

Associated Press

CEYLINPINAR, Turkey — U.S. President Donald Trump did not oppose the deal that Syrian Kurdish-led forces struck with Russia and the Syrian government to protect them against Turkey's offensive, the force's commander said Wednesday as they fighters battled a new push by Ankara-backed forces to seize a strategic border town.

The commander's comments underscored Trump's willingness to see a crucial U.S. ally in the fight against the Islamic State switch allegiance to Moscow and Damascus. Trump said Wednesday he welcomed the move by the two militaries to fill the void created when he ordered the pullout of U.S. forces from northeastern Syria.

"We told (Trump) that we are contacting the Syrian regime and the Russians in order to protect our country and land," the commander, Mazlum Abdi, told local TV station Ronahi TV. "He said, 'We are not against that.'"

The deal by the Kurds, announced Sunday, allows forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad to move into border areas held by the Kurdish-led fighters, effectively replacing the U.S. troops, and establishing Russia as the agreement's guar-

antor. Abdi spoke with Trump by phone the next day.

In a visible sign of the change, an Associated Press team saw a Russian flag raised Thursday at a watchtower of the main Kurdish militia overlooking the Turkish border near the Euphrates River. There had been no previous word of Russian forces in that location, but Russian military advisers often accompany Syrian government forces.

So far, Syrian troops have been deployed in the border town of Kobani, farther south and along a main highway to the east.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel again called on Turkey to stop its military offensive, telling parliament that the campaign "makes tens of thousands, among them thousands of children, flee."

She called it "a humanitarian drama with big geopolitical consequences," boosting the role of Russia and Iran.

She also said the Middle East and Europe are being made to feel insecure because imprisoned members of Islamic State are no longer being adequately guarded by the Kurdish-led forces, which are diverting their attention to the Turkish invasion.

rorist group, struck a deal with the Assad regime to protect themselves against Turkey, which has launched air and ground attacks on Kurdish-controlled towns in northern Syria.

Pentagon leaders fear the situation provides an opportunity for militants to resurge. Already there are reports of Islamic State prisoners going free from Kurdish-run prisons and militant cells launching attacks.

Speaking to reporters Tuesday, a senior defense official said the Pentagon was looking for opportunities to continue counterterrorism cooperation with the SDF. But officials have cut off much of the intelligence they once pro-

vided to the SDF as part of their attempt to stay out of the Kurds' fight with Turkey, a NATO ally.

"We will be adjusting to new circumstances on the ground," the official said. "We are pretty good at adapting."

The Pentagon has not said how it would navigate the SDF's new relationship with Russia, an American rival, or whether that dynamic could scuttle or further limit continued cooperation.

U.S. officials also say that they don't know how the SDF's deal with Syrian regime forces will affect Kurds' willingness to partner with the United States in the long run but that Kurdish leaders have appealed to the Pentagon to

maintain a small military presence with them in Syria, at least temporarily. It's not yet clear whether administration leaders would support such a move.

Officials are more confident about plans to bring some troops in Syria to Iraq, where they will join a force of about 5,000 Americans who have assisted the Iraqi government since 2014 to get their own Islamic State problem under control.

That force includes elite troops focused on tracking and conducting operations against senior Islamic State figures.

The makeup of the existing force in Iraq, already close to a limit set by the Iraqi government,

will have to be revised to accommodate the additional troops from Syria. Officials said it wasn't yet clear, as they focus their attention on getting troops safely out of Syria, what exact role the Syrian moved into Iraq would assume.

Since it began airstrikes in Syria in September 2014, the U.S. military and its coalition partners have pounded the Islamic State from a variety of platforms and locations, including aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf and air bases from Cyprus to Kuwait to Turkey.

Officials say future air operations may be focused from Iraq, if its government agrees; Jordan, where the U.S. military is spending millions of dollars to upgrade an air base near the Syrian border; and more distant Qatar, home to a regional American air hub.

But Assad's strengthened position may complicate U.S. discussions with Iraq and other neighboring countries, whose permission will be needed if the Pentagon plans to use their territory to conduct intensified ground or air operations in Syria.

While many of those countries are U.S. allies and have participated in limited attacks against the Islamic State in Syria, they must balance their counterterrorism concerns with a desire not to be seen meddling in neighbor countries.

Iraqi leaders in particular, who are already facing public pressure after recent protests turned violent, worry about being seen as yielding sovereignty to foreign powers and their interests.

No matter where flights originate, the Pentagon is likely to see a new reality in conducting air operations over Syria. Since 2014, American aircraft have operated nearly unchallenged by the Assad regime, which focused its own air operations in more populated areas of western Syria. After Russia entered the war in 2015, the Pentagon set up special channels to "deconflict" U.S. flights in areas where Russian aircraft overlapped.

As the Assad regime, backed by air defense forces, move east into areas that have been out of reach for years, the risks to American aircraft are likely to increase.

Officials noted that air-focused counterterrorism operations conducted without a large local partner force had kept militant groups at bay in other places, citing recent periods in Libya and Yemen as examples.

But William Wechsler, a former deputy assistant defense secretary for Special Operations and combating terrorism during the Obama administration, cautioned that air power would be most effective against extremists when paired with partner operations on the ground.

"We haven't shown that an air campaign by itself is sufficient to deal with any of these jihadist salafist threats," said Wechsler, who is now at the Atlantic Council. "At best it can be disruptive, not destructive."

NATION

Trump, Pelosi have it out

BY LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — He said she's a "third-grade" politician. She said he's having a meltdown.

And with that President Donald Trump and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi chalked up the latest explosive meeting that ended abruptly with a walkout at the White House.

It's a familiar ritual, with Trump and congressional leaders meeting on official business, only to see the session devolve into colorful, name-calling commentary that's a new kind of addition to the history books. But this time, against the backdrop of the fast-moving impeachment inquiry, Pelosi arrived not just as the leader of the opposing party but as the speaker who could determine Trump's political future.

The administration called in congressional leadership to discuss the situation in Syria. The House had just voted, 354-60, to

overwhelmingly oppose the president's announced U.S. troop withdrawal, a rare bipartisan rebuke. Trump's action has opened the door for a Turkish military attack on Syrian Kurds who have been aligned with the U.S. in fighting the country's long-running war.

Trump kicked off the meeting bragging about his "nasty" letter to Turkish President Recep Erdogan, according to a Democrat familiar with the meeting who was granted anonymity to discuss it. In the letter, Trump warned the Turkish leader, with exclamation points, not to be "slaughtering" the Kurds. The person called Trump's opening a lengthy, bombastic monologue.

Pelosi mentioned the House vote and Sen. Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader, started to read the president a quote from former Defense Secretary James Mattis on the need to keep U.S. troops in Syria to prevent a resurgence of Islamic State fighters.

But Trump cut Schumer off,

complaining that Mattis was "the world's most overrated general. You know why? He wasn't tough enough." Trump went on, "I captured ISIS."

Pelosi explained to Trump that Russia has always wanted a "foothold in the Middle East," and now it has one with the U.S. withdrawal, according to a senior Democratic aide who was also granted anonymity.

"All roads with you lead to Putin," the speaker said. Then it began.

Trump said to Pelosi, "I hate ISIS more than you do."

Pelosi responded, "You don't know that."

Schumer intervened at one point and said, "Is your plan to rely on the Syrians and the Turks?"

Trump replied, "Our plan is to keep the American people safe."

Pelosi said: "That's not a plan. That's a goal."

Trump turned to Pelosi and complained about former President Barack Obama's "red line"



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi speaks with members of the media alongside Senate Minority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer outside the White House after a meeting with President Donald Trump on Wednesday.

over Syria. According to Schumer, he then called her a "third-rate politician."

At that point, the gentle Rep. Steny Hoyer, of Maryland, the House Majority Leader, intervened. "This is not useful."

Pelosi and Hoyer stood and left the meeting. As they did, Trump said, "Goodbye, we'll see you at the polls."

From the White House drive-

way, Pelosi told reporters Trump was having some kind of "melt-down" inside. She said they had to leave because Trump was unable to grasp the reality of the situation.

Later, she would insist he even botched the insult, calling her "third-grade" rather than "third-rate."

The impeachment inquiry never came up, she said.

Diplomat says politicization of foreign policy disturbed him

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A former top State Department aide testified in the impeachment inquiry that the Trump administration's politicization of foreign policy contributed to his resignation, while the Senate GOP leader briefed colleagues on a possible Christmas impeachment trial.

The day's events, interrupted by an explosive meeting at the White House, churned as longtime State Department officials continued speaking out under subpoena — some revealing striking new details — about the actions President Donald Trump and his personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, took toward Ukraine that sparked the House investigation.

On Wednesday, Michael McKinley, a career foreign service officer and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's de facto chief of staff, told investigators behind closed doors that he could no longer look the other way amid the Trump administration's dealings with Ukraine, which were among the reasons he ended his 37-year career last week, according to multiple people familiar with the testimony, who, like others who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, were not authorized to discuss it.

"I was disturbed by the implication that foreign governments were being approached to procure negative information on political opponents," McKinley testified, according to a former colleague familiar with his remarks.

The impeachment inquiry revolves around a whistleblower's complaint that Trump was pressuring Ukraine's leader into opening an investigation of a company connected to the son of Trump's potential 2020 Democratic rival, Joe Biden. It is illegal to solicit



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

Michael McKinley, a former top aide to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, leaves Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday after testifying before congressional lawmakers.

or receive foreign help in a U.S. election.

Among McKinley's concerns was the administration's failure to support Ukrainian Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, who was ousted in March on orders from Trump.

McKinley, who as a Latin America expert was not specifically involved in Ukraine, was also frustrated that there had been no response to an August inspector general's report that found significant evidence of leadership and management problems, including allegations from career employees that Assistant Secretary of State Kevin Moley and his former senior adviser, Marie Stull, retaliated or tried to retaliate against them as holdovers from the Obama administration.

Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., told reporters outside the closed-door hearing that McKinley was

complimentary about Pompeo's role but did raise other issues.

"I think most of this is a concern by a colleague for an ambassador that he held in high regard," Meadows said, declining to provide more details of the closed session.

Republicans are crying foul over the process of the impeachment inquiry, but as House Democrats press on with the investigation, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell briefed Republicans about the possible trial ahead.

McConnell warned of a possible House impeachment vote by Thanksgiving that would force a trial in the Senate, likely by Christmas. He used slides and history lessons during a private Senate GOP lunch in the Capitol to talk about the process, according to a person familiar with the meeting.

Envoy says Trump told him to work with Giuliani

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. ambassador to the European Union said Thursday that President Donald Trump directed him and other envoys to work with his personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, on Ukraine policy and that he disagreed with the directive.

Gordon Sondland's testimony to House impeachment investigators was aimed at distancing himself from Trump and Giuliani's efforts to pressure Ukraine into investigating Democratic rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter.

Sondland said he was disappointed Trump instructed him to work with Giuliani, a directive that sidestepped the role of the State Department and National Security Council. He also said he believes it is wrong to invite a foreign government to conduct investigations for the purpose of influencing American elections.

Sondland is the latest in a series of witnesses to be interviewed behind closed doors by lawmakers. His appearance was especially anticipated since text messages and other witness testimony place him at the center of a foreign policy dialogue with Ukraine that officials feared circumvented normal channels and that is now at the center of the House impeachment inquiry.

Part of that effort involved

pushing Ukraine to commit to politically charged investigations sought by Trump, including into a gas company connected to Hunter Biden.

In prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press, Sondland aimed to untether himself from any effort by the Republican president or Giuliani to have a political rival investigated, joining other current and former administration officials who have communicated to Congress misgivings about the Trump administration's backchannel dealings with Ukraine.

But Sondland's role in the dialogue, including discussions about a quid pro quo in which Ukraine's leader would get a coveted White House visit in exchange for satisfying Trump's push for corruption investigations, may make those assertions tough for House Democrats to accept.

Sondland said he was disappointed by a May 23 White House meeting with Trump, who spurned calls by the ambassador and others to arrange a phone call and White House visit for the new Ukraine leader, Volodymyr Zelenskiy. The president was skeptical that Ukraine was serious about reform and anti-corruption and, instead of arranging the meeting his envoys wanted, directed them to talk to Giuliani, Sondland said.

NATION

Top Democrat Cummings dies

BY BRIAN WITTE
Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Maryland Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, a sharecropper's son who rose to become the powerful chairman of a U.S. House committee that investigated President Donald Trump, died early Thursday of complications from long-standing health issues, his office said. He was 68.

Cummings was a formidable orator who passionately advocated for the poor in his black-majority district, which encompasses a large portion of Baltimore as well as more well-to-do suburbs.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell opened the chamber Thursday by praising Cummings as a "living legend" and a "powerful and passionate voice with 'friends and admirers all across the political spectrum.'

Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she's devastated by his death. She called him a leader of "towering character and integrity," whose stirring voice and steadfast values pushed the Congress and country to rise always to a higher purpose."

Trump tweeted Thursday that he got to see firsthand the "strength, passion and wisdom of this highly respected political leader." Trump said Cummings' work and voice on so many issues will be "hard, if not impossible, to replace!"

As chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, Cummings led multiple investigations of the president's governmental dealings, including probes in 2019 relating to the president's family members serv-

ing in the White House.

Trump responded by criticizing the Democrat's district as a "rodent-infested mess." The comments came weeks after Trump drew bipartisan condemnation following his calls for Democratic congresswomen of color to get out of the U.S. "right now," and go back to their "brown and crime-infested countries."

Cummings replied that government officials must stop making "hateful, incendiary comments" that only serve to divide and distract the nation from its real problems, including mass shootings and white supremacy.

"Those in the highest levels of the government must stop invoking fear, using racist language and encouraging reprehensible behavior," Cummings said in a speech at the National Press Club.

Cummings' long career spanned decades in Maryland politics. He rose through the ranks of the Maryland House of Delegates before winning his congressional seat in a special election in 1996 to replace former Rep. Kweisi Mfume, who left the seat to lead the NAACP.

Cummings was an early supporter of Barack Obama's presidential bid in 2008. By 2016, Cummings was the senior Democrat on the House Benghazi Committee, which he said was "nothing more than a taxpayer-funded effort to bring harm to Hillary Clinton's campaign" for president.

Throughout his career, Cummings used his fiery voice to highlight the struggles and needs of inner-city residents. He was a firm believer in some much-debated approaches to help the poor



JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., makes a point during a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing in September 2015. Cummings, 68, died Thursday.

and addicted, such as needle exchange programs as a way to reduce the spread of AIDS.

A key figure in the Trump impeachment inquiry, Cummings had been hoping to return to Congress after a medical procedure he said would keep him away for a week. His statement didn't detail the procedure. He had previously been treated for heart and knee issues.

Cummings' committee, authorized to investigate virtually any part of the federal government, is one of three conducting the House impeachment probe of Trump.

Separately, Cummings led an effort to gain access to Trump's financial records. His committee subpoenaed records from Mazars USA, an accounting firm that has provided services to Trump.

Shortly after Cummings' death after 2 a.m. Thursday at Johns Hopkins Hospital, his constituents began mourning.

Maryland's state Senate president, U.S. Sen. Ben Cardin and others praised Cummings' service and friendship.

In a statement, his widow, Maya Rockeymoore Cummings, chairwoman of Maryland's Democratic Party, said "Congressman Cummings was an honorable man who proudly served his district and the nation with dignity, integrity, compassion and humanity. He worked until his last breath because he believed our democracy was the highest and best expression of our collective humanity and that our nation's diversity was our promise, not our problem."

Cummings was born Jan. 18, 1951. In grade school, a counselor told Cummings he was too slow to learn and spoke poorly, and he would never fulfill his dream of becoming a lawyer.

"I was devastated," Cummings told The Associated Press in 1996, shortly before he won

his seat in Congress. "My whole life changed. I became very determined."

It steered Cummings to prove that counselor wrong. He became not only a lawyer, but one of the most powerful orators in the statehouse, where he entered office in 1983. He rose to become the first black House speaker pro tem.

Cummings chaired the Congressional Black Caucus from 2003 to 2004, employing a hard-charging, explore-every-option style to put the group in the national spotlight.

In 2015, when the death of black Baltimore resident Freddie Gray sparked the worst riots the city had seen in decades, Cummings was in the streets, carrying a bullhorn and urging crowds to go home and respect a curfew. He spoke at Gray's funeral, asking all lawmakers in the church to stand up to show Gray's mother they would seek justice for her son.

Biden: Syria move proves Trump is 'complete failure'

Associated Press

DAVENPORT, Iowa — Seeking to leverage his experience in foreign policy, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden on Wednesday ripped President Donald Trump's withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Syria as the latest proof that the president is a "complete failure" who is gutting American credibility around the world.

Biden used a 40-minute speech in Iowa to excoriate Trump for withdrawing American forces and leaving Syrian Kurds, key U.S. allies in the yearslong fight against Islamic State, open to attack from Turkey.

"It's more insidious than the betrayal of our brave Kurdish partners; it's more dangerous than taking the boot off the neck of ISIS," the former vice presi-

dent said. "Trump is demolishing the moral authority of the United States of America" while emboldening U.S. adversaries, including Russia and Iran.

Biden's speech marks his latest attempt to push foreign affairs to the front-burner of the 2020 campaign. The core of Biden's message to voters from the start has been that Trump is unfit for the job, and Biden often references foreign affairs as he campaigns, but the 76-year-old candidate and his aides see the Syria situation as a new crystallization of what's at stake.

"He is a complete failure as commander in chief," Biden said. "He is the most reckless and incompetent commander in chief we've ever had."

Biden forecast a domino effect from Trump's decision and his isolationist approach in general.



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., is facing criticism for keeping quiet on whether she would raise taxes to pay for her health care plan.

Warren mum on tax hikes for health care

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Elizabeth Warren is rising to the top of the Democratic pack with ambitious promises to reshape the political and economic system. But as she faces growing scrutiny, the Massachusetts senator is opening herself to criticism that she's just another politician dodging the tough questions.

She is in a bind because of her persistent refusal during two straight presidential debates to say whether she would raise taxes on the middle class to pay for the universal health insurance plan known as "Medicare for All."

By not acknowledging taxes would almost certainly increase for a wide range of income earners, Warren avoids becoming a caricature of a Democrat itching to raise them. But she also threat-

ens to undermine the image she's fostered of a plainspoken former professor ready to tackle any issue in her quest to protect the middle class from the excesses of corporations and the wealthy.

Warren's progressive rival, Bernie Sanders, has said middle-class wages would have to rise to pay for Medicare for All.

Warren argues pundits are missing the point by focusing on taxes instead of the bottom-line cost that Americans pay for their health care. She insists that eliminating premiums and co-pays under Medicare for All would lower overall costs for all wealthier Americans.

The generous benefits Warren is promising would require tax increases of a historic magnitude to guarantee cradle-to-grave care for every U.S. resident, however.

NATION

Chicago's 25,000 teachers strike

BY KATHLEEN FOODY
AND DON BABWIN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Chicago teachers went on strike Thursday morning on picket lines after failing to reach a contract deal with the nation's third-largest school district in a dispute that canceled classes for more than 300,000 students.

The strike came after the Chicago Teachers Union confirmed Wednesday night that its 25,000 members would not return to their classrooms. It follows months of negotiations between the union and Chicago Public Schools that failed to resolve disputes over pay and benefits, class size and teacher preparation time.

The strike is Chicago's first major walkout by teachers since 2012. City officials announced early Wednesday that all classes were canceled for Thursday in hopes of giving more planning time for parents.

Chicago Teachers Union President Jesse Sharkey said Wednesday night the hope is for a "short strike with an agreement that will benefit our schools and our teachers."

He said Thursday morning while joining picketers outside Peirce Elementary International Studies School that striking teachers have long been frustrated by their classroom sizes and crowded conditions they face while trying to teach.

"There's a pent-up frustration among our membership about what conditions are like in our schools," he said, noting that Peirce elementary doesn't have



COLIN BOYLE, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES/AP

Chicago Public Schools teachers picket Thursday at Lane Tech High School during a teachers' strike. Months of negotiations failed to resolve disputes over pay and benefits, class size and preparation time.

a kindergarten class with fewer than 30 students.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot said she was disappointed by the union's decision to strike.

"We are offering a historic package on the core issues—salary, staffing and class size," she said Wednesday night at a news conference, adding that school district negotiators will remain at the bargaining table and that she hopes the union does too.

During the 2012 strike, the

district kept some schools open for half days during a seven-day walkout.

District officials said this time they will keep all buildings open during school hours, staffed by principals and employees who usually work in administrative roles.

Breakfast and lunch will be served, but all after-school activities and school buses are suspended.

Janice Jackson, the district's

CEO, encouraged parents to send their children to the school that they normally attend; however, they will be welcome in any district schools.

"We've put together a really comprehensive plan for the students," Jackson said. "We will make sure they are safe and they have a productive day."

Also striking will be 7,000 support staffers, whose union also failed to reach a contract agreement.

Fort Worth faith leaders offer police reform vision

BY JAMIE STENGLE
AND MICHAEL TARM
Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Community and faith leaders on Wednesday called on the Trump administration to open a civil rights investigation into the Fort Worth Police Department in the wake of a white officer's fatal shooting of a black woman in her home, saying the goal should be a police reform plan enforced by a federal judge.

It's unclear if that objective is realistic given the disfavor, even hostility, the Department of Justice under President Donald Trump has shown toward such court-supervised plans, called consent decrees, which agency policymakers say too often tie the hands of officers while imposing burdensome costs.

Pastor Kyev Tatum, among those who gathered at a news conference in Fort Worth to announce their request, said attempts to get the city to end the kind of abuses that contributed to the killing of Atatiana Jefferson on Saturday hadn't worked. No mechanism exists to hold city of-

ficials accountable, he said.

"It's time for somebody else to take control," Tatum said.

Tatum and others sent a letter to the Justice Department asking it to determine whether there has been "a continued pattern and practice of using excessive force" against minorities in Fort Worth.

Officer Aaron Dean, 34, resigned and was arrested Monday for firing a single bullet through a windowpane while investigating a neighbor's report about the front door being open at Jefferson's home.

"The only alternative to prevent future unlawful killings," the coalition letter said, "is to place the city under a federal consent decree."

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price on Wednesday reiterated the city's commitment to addressing concerns. She said in a statement, "My focus remains on healing this city and pushing forward to see that we make progress."

She said actions currently underway include engaging national experts to review procedures within the police department, with an independent third-party panel being on board by Nov. 19.

She said they'll continue to implement recommendations from a race and culture task force, including hiring an independent police monitor and diversity officer.

The Department of Justice conducted civil rights investigations of nearly 70 police departments between 1994, when Congress authorized them, and the end of President Barack Obama's administration.

The agency's current policy, established by then-U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, pulled back on previous administrations' embrace of long-lasting, in-depth federal investigations of police followed by reform plans supervised by federal judges.

Hours before he resigned as attorney general in November 2018, Sessions signed a memo providing guidance to staff that portrayed consent decrees as having been too sweeping, too open-ended and too much of a strain on city budgets.

The guidance doesn't explicitly rule out consent decrees but sharply limits situations in which the Justice Department would pursue them.

"The Justice Department have



JAMIE STENGLE/AP

Pastor Kyev Tatum speaks to a group of community leaders on Wednesday in Fort Worth, Texas, who want a judge to help reform the city's police department.

done very, very few investigations (under Trump)," said Jonathan Smith, a former Justice Department attorney. "I can't say for sure it won't open an investigation against Fort Worth — but it seems unlikely."

Opioid firms seek to settle as trial looms

BY MARK GILLISPIE
AND GEOFF MULVILLY
Associated Press

CLEVELAND — With a trial looming, major drug distributors and manufacturers are pressuring to settle thousands of claims against them related to the nation's persistent opioid crisis.

The companies are negotiating with state attorneys general as jury selection is expected to wrap up Thursday in the first federal trial over an overdose epidemic that has claimed more than 400,000 American lives in the past two decades. Arguments are scheduled to begin Monday against some of the biggest names in the pharmaceutical industry unless they can strike a deal.

A source familiar with the negotiations described the outlines of a tentative nationwide settlement as worth tens of billions of dollars. The talks involve the distributors AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson, as well as drug makers Johnson & Johnson and Teva.

Under the proposed terms, which could change, the three distributors would pay a total of \$18 billion over 18 years, Johnson & Johnson would chip in \$4 billion over time, and Teva would contribute an estimated \$15 billion worth of overdose antidotes and treatment drugs.

Another \$14 billion would come from distribution of those drugs, based on calculations of how much a distributor could charge for them.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the talks were continuing. Samantha Fisher, a spokeswoman for the Tennessee attorney general's office, confirmed a \$50 billion settlement framework that was first reported by The New York Times.

If a tentative settlement is reached in the days ahead, it would need sign-off by the states and local governments that have sued numerous players in the opioid industry. Perhaps the most well-known of those, Purdue Pharma, was taken out of the consolidated federal lawsuits after it filed last month for bankruptcy protection.

The litigation is being overseen by a U.S. District Court judge in Cleveland, who is moving ahead with an initial trial that involves Ohio's Cuyahoga and Summit counties. They claim the companies engaged in a conspiracy that has ravaged their communities, while the companies say they complied with the law and supplied only drugs that doctors prescribed.

Several companies, including Johnson & Johnson, have already reached settlements with the two counties and have been removed from the trial.

While the case concerns only claims for the two counties, it can pave the way for resolving more than 2,000 other lawsuits filed over the opioid crisis.

NATION

Lawsuit is planned over VA hospital death

BY JOHN RABY

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — An attorney representing the family of a patient who died at a Veterans Affairs hospital in West Virginia says he plans to sue over what he believes is the man's suspicious death from a wrongful insulin injection.

Charleston attorney Tony O'Dell said a notice of a pending lawsuit was filed this week with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the death of John William Hallman. The Navy veteran died at the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg last year.

The notice said Hallman, 87, was given

a shot of insulin "he did not need and for which no medical order was placed." It said the shot caused his blood sugar to spike, leading to his death.

The Exponent Telegram of Clarksburg first reported the notice.

The notice said Hallman's death "is considered a homicide based upon the pattern of events leading to his death, although his body is not available for autopsy."

Federal prosecutors are probing the deaths of up to 11 patients. Attorneys representing the families of men who died say at least two of the deaths have been ruled homicides, with both veterans dying from wrongful insulin injections.

U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, of West Virginia,

has said he spoke directly with Attorney General William Barr about the deaths and told Barr in a letter that he has "grave concerns over the pace of the investigation."

The Democrat said VA officials had told him a "person of interest" was no longer in contact with any veterans at the facility. The VA inspector general told Manchin's office about the opening of a medical and criminal investigation of the hospital in July 2018 after at least nine patients were diagnosed with unexplained low blood sugar, the senator said.

O'Dell's notice also mentions a "person of interest" who was hired as a certified nursing assistant and was working at the time of Hallman's death. The notice said

the assistant had "documented involvement during the hospitalization while critically low levels of glucose were recorded." The notice doesn't name that worker.

In the deaths that attorneys said have been ruled homicides, former Army Sgt. Felix Kirk McDermott, 82, was wrongly injected with a fatal dose of insulin at the hospital in April 2018, according to a notice of a pending lawsuit. An attorney representing the family of George Nelson Shaw Sr., 81, a retired member of the Air Force, said he also died at the hospital in April 2018 from a wrongful insulin injection.

Bill Powell, the U.S. attorney in West Virginia, has said the investigation is a "top priority."

Earthquake alerts to become available statewide in Calif.

BY JOHN ANTczAK
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Earthquake early warning alerts will become publicly available throughout California for the first time this week, potentially giving people time to protect themselves from harm, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services said Wednesday.

The nation's first statewide quake warning system will debut Thursday, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake that ravaged the San Francisco Bay area on Oct. 17, 1989, as well as the annual Great Shakeout safety drill.

Warnings produced by the ShakeAlert system will be pushed through two delivery systems: a cellphone app called MyShake and the same wireless notification system that issues Amber Alerts, meaning people may receive both notifications.

"This app is at a place now where we're satisfied with the performance and the testing, which has been very well done, (so) that we think we're at a place where it's not perfect but we can

keep people safe, and that's our ultimate threshold," said Brian Ferguson, deputy director for crisis communication and public affairs at the Office of Emergency Services.

The state earthquake app, developed at the University of California, Berkeley, is available for download to iOS users through iTunes and through GooglePlay stores for Android phones.

"The alerts will only go to people that are going to feel shaking," said Richard Allen, director of the UC Berkeley Seismological Laboratory.

The thresholds for an alert are an earthquake of magnitude 4.5 and shaking intensity level 3.

"Intensity 1 is you don't feel it; intensity 2 is some people may feel it; intensity 3 is many people do feel it," Allen said.

The ShakeAlert system is being developed by the U.S. Geological Survey and partners for the West Coast states. It is most complete in California.

The system does not predict earthquakes. Rather, it uses numerous seismic stations to detect the start of an earthquake and

light-speed communications to send the data to computers that instantly calculate location, magnitude and intensity of shaking and create alerts to be distributed to areas that will be affected.

Depending on distance from the epicenter, the alerts may give

warnings of several seconds to a minute before shaking arrives at a given location — enough time to duck under desks, pull a knife away from a surgical patient or shut down elevators, trains and industrial processes.

After lengthy testing, alerts

were made broadly available to businesses, utilities, schools and other entities last year. The only

large-scale public notification

is in Los Angeles County, where an alerting app developed for the city of Los Angeles hasn't been triggered yet.



REED SAXON/AP

Scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey set up an earthquake monitoring station on the San Andreas Fault in a desert canyon near Thermal, Calif., in 2009. This week California is debuting the nation's first statewide earthquake warning system.

UK family that made illicit US border crossing deported

Associated Press

A British family that made an unauthorized crossing from Canada into the United States was deported Wednesday after nearly two weeks in federal custody, ending an ordeal that family members called the worst of their lives.

The extended Connors family, which includes four adults, toddler twins and an infant, had been held at a detention center in Berks County, Pa. They've since been returned to England. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said in a statement.

Eileen Connors, 24, has said she and her family mistakenly crossed the border into Washington state while trying to avoid an animal in the road and were swiftly taken into custody by U.S. Border Patrol. Con-

nors' affidavit said family members were subsequently incarcerated in a series of cold and dirty immigration facilities and "treated like criminals" as they waited to be sent home.

U.S. officials have asserted the family crossed the border on purpose, noting their vehicle was observed "slowly and deliberately" driving through a ditch to cross into U.S. territory in Blaine Wash., on Oct. 2. Two of the family members had previously been denied entry to the U.S., according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Family representatives blasted the border agency's response Wednesday.

"We are not surprised that the agency would put the character of noncitizen victims of their misconduct and neglect into

question to justify their actions. This is CBP's typical response to accountability. However, their communication in no way contradicts the family's account that for a brief moment they turned into an unmarked road on United States soil," said a statement from Aldea — The People's Justice Center.

The family had been detained at the Berks County Residential Center outside Reading since Oct. 5. In her affidavit, Eileen Connors described a frigid facility with dirty, malfunctioning bathrooms and uncaring, negligent staff.

Her complaints have been echoed by other detainees at the Berks facility, one of three family detention centers in the U.S. that hold children and parents who are seeking asylum or who entered the country illegally. Activists have long called for the detention center's closure.

Aldea, which represents immigrant families detained at Berks, said the facility currently holds 27 children, including seven children under the age of 5.

U.S. immigration officials have said the Berks center "has an outstanding track record."

An email seeking comment from British consular officials in New York on the family's treatment in U.S. custody was not immediately returned.

NATION

Killer seeks to overturn conviction

By JACQUES BILLEAUD
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Lawyers are scheduled to make arguments Thursday before the Arizona Court of Appeals as Jodi Arias seeks to overturn her murder conviction in the 2008 killing of her former boyfriend.

Arias argues a prosecutor's misconduct and a judge's failure to control news coverage during the case deprived her of the right to a fair trial.

A lawyer defending the conviction on the state's behalf said overwhelming evidence of Arias' guilt should outweigh mistakes that were made by the prosecutor who won the case.

Arias, who will not be in the courtroom during her appellate hearing, is serving a life sentence for her first-degree murder conviction in the death of Travis Alexander at his home in the Phoenix suburb of Mesa.

Prosecutors have said Arias violently attacked Alexander in a jealous rage after he wanted to end their affair and planned a trip to Mexico with another woman.

Arias has acknowledged killing Alexander but claimed she acted in self-defense after he attacked her. He was stabbed nearly 30 times, had his throat slit and was shot in the head.

The guilt phase of Arias' trial ended in 2013 with jurors convicting her of murder but deadlocking on punishment. A second sentencing trial ended in early 2015 with another jury deadlock, leading a judge to sentence Arias to prison for life.

The case turned into a media circus as salacious and violent details about Arias and Alexander were broadcast live around the world.

Arias had actively courted the spotlight since her 2008 arrest. She did interviews on TV's "48 Hours" and "Inside Edition" after

she was arrested and was on the witness stand for several weeks during the trial.

Arias' lawyers said prosecutor Juan Martinez improperly questioned witnesses, courted journalists and disregarded court rulings by repeating questions after the judge had overruled them.

They also said Judge Sherry Stephens let news organizations turn the trial into a "circus-like atmosphere" and was slow to restrict journalists even when they broke the court's media-coverage rules.

Terry Crist, an attorney for the Arizona Attorney General's Office, has said in court records that the publicity didn't cause any prejudice against Arias but acknowledged instances in which Martinez, an argentinean with Arias and a psychotherapist who testified on her behalf.

Crist has said when issues of publicity popped up during the

trial, jurors repeatedly said they had not seen news coverage of the case and could remain fair and impartial.

Crist has said Arias generated publicity by giving TV interviews before the trial and spoke on camera to a reporter on the day of her guilty verdict, even though her attorney didn't want her to do so.

After Arias' attorney filed their appeal, new complaints were made against Martinez, though none of those have been raised in her appeal.

A judge who handles disciplinary cases against attorneys this summer threw out allegations that Martinez made sexually inappropriate comments to female law clerks in his office and had inappropriate contact with a woman who had been dismissed from Arias' jury and later texted nude photos of herself to the prosecutor.

The remaining allegations against Martinez in the attorney



Jodi Arias

disciplinary case included claims that the prosecutor leaked another juror's identity to a blogger with whom Martinez was having a sexual relationship.

Martinez was recommended by the county prosecutor's office in 2018 for inappropriate and unprofessional conduct toward female law clerks.

said that Little also flirted with her and that Holland had braced her for that, telling her to "just let it happen."

Holland also told detectives not to bombard Little with questions, just be patient and let him fill in the details. If he tilts his head to the side and scratches his neck with the back of his hand, don't interrupt him; he's going back in time and reliving the crimes. When he pats his leg a certain way, pretend not to notice; he's getting aroused thinking about the killings.

"He's really big on respect," said Lubbock, Texas, Detective Brandon Price. "If he sees disrespect in the room, then sometimes that may end the interview." He added: "If you showed emotion, you're excited or get angry, then that could end the interview. We made sure to maintain a poker face."

Detective Sgt. Michael Monguzzo of Florida's Marion County questioned Little about Rosie Hill, 20, a woman who was picked up at a bar and strangled, her body left next to a pig pen in 1982. Monguzzo called the victim's mother, Minnie Hill, and told her his last question to Little would be whatever had been weighing on her mind all these years.

"She said, 'I just want to know why,'" the detective said.

Knowing he had to be careful how he phrased the question to the serial killer, Monguzzo remarked on how Little had gotten away with so many slayings over the years, and Little offered a glimpse into his motive.

"That's when he started talking about God and how 'When God made me, he knew what I would do,'" the detective said, adding that Little believed he was doing what he was "made to do."

Interviewing serial killer: Listen, play along

By KELLI KENNEDY
Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Keep him talking, don't interrupt him and, no matter what, don't ask why he killed his victims.

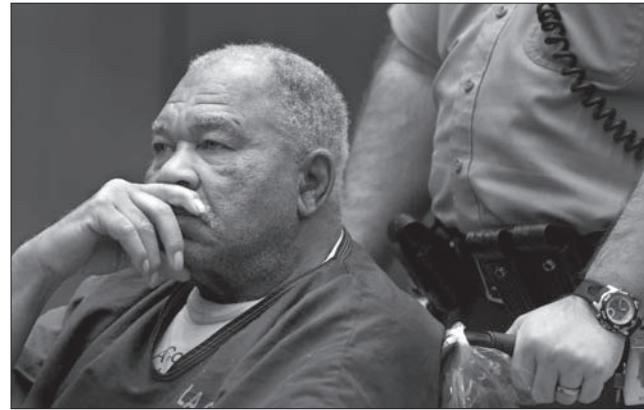
Those were the instructions Texas Ranger James Holland gave to the dozens of homicide detectives around the country when they got their moment with Samuel Little, hoping to solve decades-old cold cases and bring back answers to desperate families from the man the FBI identified this month as the most prolific serial killer in U.S. history.

Little ultimately spilled forth with chilling confessions, claiming he killed 93 women in all between 1970 and 2005 and smilingly recounting the details with startling clarity. But to get what they needed, detectives had to employ a certain amount of psychology, some of which made them uncomfortable, such as laughing along with him or putting up with his flirting.

Miami-Dade Police homicide detective David Denmark and his partner interviewed Little last October about two murders in the Miami area from the 1970s. Holland had told them what to expect.

"You have to change your attitude and you have to become his friend," Denmark said. "And you have to laugh with him and make fun of his victims sometimes, sort of like, 'Yeah, I guess at that point she deserved it.' Even though you hate saying it. You want him to think, 'These guys are pretty cool' to keep him talking."

For Denmark, Little recalled his first victim, Mary Brosey, 33, saying that he would never again try to bury a body in Florida's hard limestone soil and that he had to leave part of her leg ex-



DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

Samuel Little appears at Superior Court in Los Angeles in March 2013. Little, pronounced the most prolific serial killer in U.S. history, confessed his crimes to homicide detectives well briefed on how to keep him talking and get the information they needed.

posed. He also confessed to killing Angela Chapman, 25, in 1976, saying he started to drown her, then pulled her out of the water and strangled her.

He remembered Brosley's flowered sundress and how he played with her chain necklace and marveled at her beautiful neck before strangling her.

Brosley's sister Clare Coppolino said she had no idea her sister had moved to Florida, describing it as "an absolute shock" when she heard from the detective after nearly 50 years. She said her initial reaction to Little's crime was "anger, but then more pity for him than anything. Pity to think, 'I

don't know what his background was,' but to think this man ended up murdering all these women."

Little, 79, is now serving multiple life sentences for three killings in California. He also pleaded guilty to a 1994 murder in Odessa, Texas. Holland elicited scores of confessions from him last year in Texas and then set the guidelines for detectives who would later arrive in the state one by one with stacks of old case files from California to Florida. The detectives would visit him as if on an assembly line, with sometimes two or three agents a day going in.

The killer has also drawn remarkably detailed, color portraits

of dozens of his victims that have proved helpful in cracking cases.

Police around the country have confirmed about 50 of his confessions so far and consider the rest credible.

As Little detailed his crimes, he showed no remorse, talked candidly, almost proudly, and seemed to be enjoying himself, detectives said.

At one point, he smiled when recalling a murder, and Detective Malia Langton from Fort Myers, Fla., found the corners of her own mouth turn up — and was horrified.

"He was giddy. That's what

threw me," Langton said. She

was talking about God and how "When God made me, he knew what I would do," the detective said, adding that Little believed he was doing what he was "made to do."

NATION

Owl species killed in effort to save another

BY PHUONG LE
Associated Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — As he stood amid the thick old-growth forests in the coastal range of Oregon, Dave Wiens was nervous. Before he trained to shoot his first barred owl, he had never fired a gun.

He eyes the big female owl, her feathers streaked brown and white, perched on a branch at just the right distance. Then he squeezed the trigger and the owl fell to the forest floor; its carcass adding to a running tally of more than 2,400 barred owls killed so far in a controversial experiment by the U.S. government to test whether the northern spotted owl's rapid decline in the Pacific Northwest can be stopped by killing its aggressive East Coast cousin.

Wiens is the son of a well-known ornithologist and grew up fascinated by birds, and his graduate research in owl interactions helped lay the groundwork for this tense moment.

"It's a little distasteful, I think to go out killing owls to save another owl species," said Wiens, a biologist who still views each shooting as "gut-wrenching" as the first. "Nonetheless, I also feel like from a conservation standpoint, our back was up against the wall. We knew that barred owls were outcompeting spotted owls and their populations were going haywire."

The federal government has been trying for decades to save the northern spotted owl, a native bird that sparked an intense battle over logging across Washington, Oregon and California decades ago.

After the owl was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990, earning it a cover on Time Magazine, federal officials halted logging on millions of acres of old-growth forests on federal lands to protect the bird's habitat. But the birds' population continued to decline.

Meanwhile, researchers, including Wiens, began documenting another threat — larger, more aggressive barred owls competing with spotted owls for food and space and displacing them in some areas.

In almost all ways, the barred owl is the spotted owl's worst enemy: They reproduce more often, have more babies per year and eat the same prey, like squirrels and wood rats. And they now outnumber spotted owls in many areas of the native bird's historic range.

So in a last-ditch effort to see whether they can save spotted owls, federal officials are resorting to killing hundreds of federally protected barred owls.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service experiment, which began in 2015, has raised thorny questions: To what extent can we reverse declines that have unfolded over decades, often due partially to actions by humans? And as climate change continues to shake up the landscape, displacing species and



A northern spotted owl, left, in the Deschutes National Forest near Camp Sherman, Ore., and a barred owl in East Burke, Vt.



altering how and where plants and animals live and thrive, how should we intervene?

The experimental killing of barred owls raised such moral dilemmas when it first was proposed in 2012 that the Fish and Wildlife Service took the unusual step of hiring an ethicist to help work through whether it was acceptable and could be done humanely.

Just as with other conservation measures that involve killing one creature to save another, the program also prompted litigation and debate.

Federal and state officials, for example, have broken the necks of thousands of crows to save the warbler, a songbird once on the brink of extinction. To preserve salmon runs in the Pacific Northwest and perch and other fish in the Midwest, federal and state agencies kill thousands of large seabirds called double-crested cormorants. And last year, Congress passed a law making it easier for Oregon, Washington, Idaho and American Indian tribes to kill sea lions that imperil salmon runs in the Columbia River.

The owl experiment is unusual because it involves killing one species of owl to save another owl species — and it may well be the largest killing program involving raptors.

In four small study areas in Washington, Oregon and Northern California, Wiens and his trained team have been picking off invasive barred owls with 12-gauge shotguns to see whether the native birds return to their nesting habitat once their competitors are gone. Small efforts to remove barred owls in British Columbia and northern California already showed promising results.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has a permit to kill up to 3,600

owls and, if the \$5 million program works, could decide to expand its efforts.

Wiens, who works for the U.S. Geological Survey, now views his gun as "a research tool" in humankind's attempts to maintain biodiversity and rebalance the forest ecosystem. Because the barred owl has few predators in Northwest forests, he sees his team's role as apex predator, acting as a cap on a population that doesn't have one.

"Humans, by stepping in and taking that role in nature, we may be able to achieve more biodiversity in the environment, rather than just having barred owls take over and wipe out all the prey species," he said.

Marc Bekoff, professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, finds the practice abhorrent and said humans should find another way to help owls.

"There's no way to couch it as a good thing if you're killing one species to save another," Bekoff said.

And Michael Harris, who directs the wildlife law program for Friends of Animals, thinks the government should focus on what humans are doing to the environment and protect habitats rather than scapegoating barred owls.

"Things were put into motion a century ago. We really have to let these things work themselves out," said Harris, whose group unsuccessfully sued to stop the killing and is now contesting an Endangered Species Act provision called an "incidental take" permit that exempts landowners who kill spotted owls during activities considered lawful, such as logging.

"It's going to be very common with climate change," Harris said. "What are we going to do

— pick and choose the winners?"

Some see a responsibility to intervene, however, noting that humans are partly to blame for the underlying conditions with activities like logging, which helped lead to the spotted owl's decline. And others just see a win-win situation.

"A decision not to kill the barred owl is a decision to let the spotted owl go extinct," said Bob Salinger, conservation director with the Audubon Society of Portland. "That's what we have to wrestle with."

Barred owls are native to eastern North America but began moving West at the turn of the 20th century. Scientists believe they migrated to western Canada across the Great Plains in the early 1900s, using forests that popped up as people learned to manage wildfires and planted trees around farms. They arrived in Washington in 1973 and then moved south into Oregon and California.

If the experimental removal of barred owls improves the spotted owl populations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife may consider killing more owls as part of a larger, long-term management strategy. Enough success has already been noted that the experiment already has been extended to August 2021.

"What we're trying to do is find a way to manage barred owls — not to get rid of them completely ... so that spotted owls can still survive on the landscape while we look for opportunities to help the spotted owl recover," said Robin Brown, who leads the agency's owl experiment.

At the study site, Washington's Central Cascades, only a few pairs of spotted owls remain and Wiens questions whether they can be saved there. But in Oregon and Northern California, they're at least more robust, while still

dwindling.

"We're seeing a pattern with removals that were there when we began are still there, yet the area where we're not doing removals, they're vanishing very quickly," Wiens said. "But we're not seeing new spotted owls move into these areas. New owls moving in is really the key sign of success."

"I certainly don't see northern spotted owls going extinct completely," he said, adding that "extinction in this case will be much longer process and from what we've seen from doing these removal experiments, we may be able to slow some of those declines."

Wiens has established a routine: It is pitch black when he puts his truck on an isolated road west of the central Oregon town of Corvallis, the town where he grew up.

Wiens is 6 feet, 6 inches tall, but the trees dwarfs him as he approaches a clearing, the ground squeezing like a sponge at every step. He sets a digital bird caller on the ground, steps back and waits as the first of several vocalizations penetrates the night, sounding a lot like: "Who? Who? Who cooks for you?"

Barred owls can't stand intruders in their territory so they will swoop in to chase another owl out. Sometimes, they attack.

Wiens ramps up the pre-recorded calls until he hits one that sounds a lot like screeching monkeys. Somewhere in the darkness comes the muffled call of a male owl. "Now hear that?" he says, his headlamp scanning high branches. "He's way up there." He plays a few more calls, but the male bird never shows.

That same night, at another remote location, Wiens' colleague Jordan Hazen has better luck.

Just after midnight, after spending several hours in the woods, Hazen carries a dead male owl in a white plastic bag into the lab in Corvallis. Inside the tight space, he weighs it, lays it on the counter and spreads the wings to measure its wingspan, revealing streaks of white and dark brown feathers on the bird's chest.

The owl appears intact, an effort taken so specimens can be shipped out for research at museums and universities across the country. Several dozen had been shipped earlier that day to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

"They're beautiful birds. It's a little sad to have to kill them," said Hazen, a wildlife technician who took the job in 2015 after spending two years surveying for increasingly scarce spotted owls.

His hands still shake every time he pulls the trigger.

"You're taught all of your life that owls and raptors are to be protected," he said. "People ask me how it is killing the owls. As a hunter, it's fun going out and bagging your ducks and geese. With the owls, you don't get any kind of pleasure out of it. It's just something you have to do."

WORLD

Tentative Brexit deal struck but votes uncertain

BY RAF CASERT
AND JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Britain and the European Union said Thursday that they have struck an outline Brexit deal after days of intense see-saw negotiations — though it must still be formally approved by the bloc and ratified by the European and U.K. Parliaments.

Hours before a summit of all 28 EU national leaders, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker tweeted: "We have one! It's a fair and balanced agreement for the EU and the UK and it is testament to our commitment to find solutions."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted that the two sides had struck a "great new deal" and urged U.K. lawmakers to ratify it in a special session on Saturday.

Immediately complicating matters was Johnson's Northern Irish government allies which didn't wait a minute to say they could not back the outline deal because of provisions for the Irish border.

Johnson needs all the support he can get to push any deal past a deeply divided Parliament and will surely temper jubilation at the EU summit. The UK parliament already rejected a previous deal three times.

Technical negotiators struggled longest to fine-tune customs and sales tax regulations that will have to manage trade in goods between the Northern Ireland and Ireland — where the U.K. and the

EU share their only land border. After months of gloom over the stalled Brexit process, European leaders have sounded upbeat this week.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Wednesday that "I want to believe that a deal is being finalized," while German Chancellor Angela Merkel said negotiations were "in the final stretch."

They were proven right on Thursday.

Upon the news, the pound hit a five-month high upon the U.S. dollar.

Johnson — who took office in July vowing Britain would finally leave the EU on Oct. 31, come what may — likened Brexit to climbing Mount Everest.

He will have to climb some more to get the Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party on board. DUP leader Arlene Foster and the party's parliamentary chief, Nigel Dodds, said they "could not support what is being suggested on customs and consent issues," referring to a say the Northern Irish authorities might have future developments.

The party said the position was unchanged after the announcement of the provisional deal.

Both the customs and consent arrangements are key to guaranteeing an open border between the U.K.'s Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland — the main obstacle to a Brexit deal.



MATT DUNHAM/AP

Extinction Rebellion climate change protesters stand with other protesters sitting and blocking traffic on Whitehall at the bottom of Trafalgar Square during a rally in London on Wednesday.

Commuters, climate activists scuffle amid London protests

BY MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

LONDON — Angry commuters scuffled with climate activists who climbed onto the roofs of trains early Thursday, snarling services in the busy morning rush hours in the British capital.

Londoners have largely tolerated a series of peaceful protests in recent days by the Extinction Rebellion group, but interfering with workers' morning commute appeared to be a step too far for some.

Television images showed at least one man reaching up and grabbing the leg of a protester on top of a Tube train, dragging him onto the platform where he was

quickly surrounded as he lay on the ground.

British Transport Police say they were called to three stations in east London early Thursday after protesters climbed onto the roofs of trains or glued themselves to the carriages.

Robin Boardman, a spokesman for the protesters, said that if such action is necessary to make the government take notice of their climate change demands, "then this is what we must do."

"None of us want to inconvenience ordinary people," he said. "That's why we're doing this in the morning when it will impact business as usual, and not in the evening, when people want to get home to be with their loved ones."

Police arrested a total of eight people and urged protesters not to target London's underground rail network.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan condemned the protesters.

"This illegal action is extremely dangerous, counterproductive and is causing unacceptable disruption to Londoners who use public transport to get to work," he said.

More than 1,400 people have been arrested since the group began blocking roads, bridges and airports in London over a week ago to demand faster action on climate change. Most have been released without being charged.

Opposition lawmakers again shout down Hong Kong leader



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

Pro-democracy lawmaker Gary Fan, center, is removed by security officials as he protests while Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam speaks at the Legislative Council in Hong Kong on Thursday.

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam was forced from the legislature for the second day Thursday by opposition members protesting a bloody attack on a leader of the nearly 5-month-old pro-democracy movement.

The lawmakers shouted and waved placards depicting Lam with bloodied hands, prompting the removal of 14 guards and the suspension of the question-and-answer session.

On Wednesday, Lam was forced to abandon an annual policy address in the chamber, later delivering it by television.

Disruption in the chamber and the attack Wednesday night on Jimmy Sham by assailants wielding hammers and knives marked the latest dramatic turn in the unrest that has rocked the city since

June. Protesters and police have both deployed levels of violence unseen since the former British colony reverted to Chinese rule in 1997.

Lam took just three questions, all from pro-government lawmakers.

In one response, Lam reiterated that her "first priority" was ending the violence that has dealt a blow to the local economy as well as Hong Kong's reputation as a safe, law-abiding center for finance and business with a sophisticated independent judiciary.

Lam said she was working with the city's 180,000 public servants and transport authorities to restore order, although that task was made harder by members of the public sympathetic to the cause of the "rioters," as she termed the hard-core protesters.

Shortly after, she withdrew

amid chants and calls for her resignation, with pro-democratic legislator Claudia Mo shouting, "Carrie Lam, you are a liar!"

The protests began in response to a now-withdrawn extradition bill that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent for trial in Communist Party-controlled courts in mainland China. The movement ballooned to encompass broader clamors for universal suffrage, an independent inquiry of the policing methods used against protesters and other demands, including ending the description of protesters as "rioters."

The demonstrations have also been fueled by widespread concerns that Beijing is chipping away at the separate political and legal freedoms Beijing promised Hong Kong could maintain for 50 years following the transfer from British rule.

MILITARY

Smorgasbord of military tech, gadgets offered at AUSA event

By CARLOS BONGIOANNI

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Association of the United States Army wrapped up its annual meeting in the nation's capital Wednesday, and in the process satisfied the appetite of many hungry for the latest in military gadgets and technology.

From mobile howitzers and armored vehicles to drones and massive tilt-rotor aircraft, there was plenty to see.

More than 700 exhibitors took part in the three-day event that allowed vendors and defense contractors to showcase their newest military technologies.

More than 30,000 attendees representing more than 80 countries were expected to view the spectacle, which also offered more than 130 events including luncheons, discussions and entertainment venues.

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Clockwise from top: Konrad Kreis, 9, from Pensacola, Fla., looks through the eyepiece of a smart helmet as he sits in the cockpit of a Bell V-280 Valor tilt-rotor aircraft on display at the 2019 AUSA convention in Washington on Tuesday. An assortment of ground vehicles draw crowds in an exhibition hall. Unmanned aerial loitering munition systems produced by UVision are displayed. An Elbit Systems tracked armored fighting vehicle, developed as a future combat vehicle that features autonomous capabilities and artificial intelligence, is displayed.

PHOTOS BY CARLOS BONGIOANNI/Stars and Stripes

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Barrett OK'd as Air Force secretary

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate has confirmed a former ambassador and senior official at the Federal Aviation Administration as civilian leader of the Air Force.

Wednesday's 85-7 vote makes Barbara Barrett the third consecutive woman to lead the Air

Force, following Heather Wilson and Deborah James. Wilson resigned from the post in May.

Barrett is a former ambassador to Finland. Most recently she was chairwoman of the Aerospace Corp., which is a federally funded research and development organization focused on space.

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- Home Loan Guarantees and Housing-related Assistance

- Life Insurance
- Memorial Benefits
- Pension
- Spouses, Dependents and Survivors Benefits

>>> va.gov/stars

Donnell Lee Lewis
U.S. Army Veteran

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

St. Louis might have to pay back trolley money

MO ST. LOUIS — If a St. Louis-area streetcar line ceases operation, the federal government may want back some of the millions of dollars it spent on the project.

That's the assessment of James Wild, of the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, which coordinates the region's federal transportation funding.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports that the U.S. government paid for about two-thirds of the \$51.5 million Loop Trolley, a 2.2-mile system running from University City's Delmar Loop to the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis. It opened in November after years of delays. Ridership has been low.

The trolley board is seeking city and county funding, saying the trolley needs \$200,000 by November to keep operating and another \$500,000 for 2020.

Rural city getting its first grocery store

UT SANTAUQUIN — A rural Utah city is opening its first grocery store.

The Daily Herald reported construction began Monday on the first grocery store in Santauquin, a city of about 14,000 residents in northern Utah.

The Santauquin Market is the first step in the city's plan to build a commercial district. Officials expect the store to add more than 100 jobs and increase Santauquin's tax revenue.

Santauquin city manager Ben Reeves said Santauquin has prioritized development in recent years, adding a traffic signal downtown and expanding Main Street.

Police: Naked man found after vandalism

FL CAPE CORAL — A Florida man who was found nude by deputies is facing charges after being accused of using a forklift and a hammer to wreak havoc before taking a shower at a plumbing business.

The News-Press reported Joseph Michael Bieniek, 24, was confronted by an employee at United Plumbing on Friday.

The employee told Lee County deputies he was working late in the warehouse and went to investigate a noise when he found Bieniek standing naked and clutching a hammer. The employee said Bieniek didn't threaten him.

Bieniek was released Sunday on \$26,500 bond and faces two charges of burglary and charges of resisting arrest, larceny and criminal mischief.

Man charged in attack with bowling ball

IL CICERO — A man has been charged in connection with a bowling ball attack that left the victim in a coma.

Cicero town spokesman Ray Hanania said Demetrius Easton, 30, faces a charge of attempted first-degree murder in the Sept. 5 attack at Cicero Hall Bowl in the



MARK MORAN/The (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.) Citizens' Voice

Big wheel in Wilkes-Barre

AI Zuba corrects his balance as he rides his unicycle at Kirby Park in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., on Monday

Chicago suburb. He was arrested Sunday.

Diamante Williams was struck in the head with a 14-pound bowling ball. He suffered a skull fracture and was placed in a medically induced coma to aid his recovery. Police said he remains hospitalized in serious condition.

Hanania said the fight occurred during a promotion at the bowling alley.

Transgender rest room policy reversed

GA JASPER — A Georgia school district said it won't let transgender students use bathrooms aligning with their gender identity, reversing a previous decision.

The Pickens County school district announced the decision Wednesday following a heated public meeting Monday night.

The district said it wants to consult with police and others about how to guarantee safety, citing death threats, student harassment and vandalism.

Superintendent Carlton Wilson had earlier said students could use bathrooms that correspond to their gender identities. But Wilson said he received death threats after the announcement and put the policy change on hold until he could talk to the five-member school board.

Wilson has said transgender students can use gender-neutral bathrooms. A number of federal courts have ruled students should be able to use bathrooms consistent with their gender identities.

THE CENSUS

2,000

Porte County town of Wanatah, Northwest Indiana's The Times reported the fire prematurely ended the 2019 Hoosier Classic Million Dollar One Loft Race by killing the birds that were scheduled to race Monday.

Town decides to keep Halloween on Oct. 31

MA WORCESTER — The second-largest city in Massachusetts is sticking with the Oct. 31 date for Halloween celebrations this year.

The Worcester City Council made the decision Tuesday.

Councilor Matthew Valley was originally pushing to permanently change the holiday's date to the last Saturday of October to avoid problems with midweek trick-or-treating.

The Telegram & Gazette reported many city councilors have no interest in changing the date, including Councilor-at-Large Konstantina Lukes, who said "let's not rewrite history now."

Charges dropped against bus driver

CT VERNON — The lawyer for a bus driver who had been charged with locking a passenger in the vehicle's luggage compartment said the criminal case has been dropped.

Attorney Nate Baber told The Boston Globe that Wendy Alberty

is no longer facing reckless endangerment, unlawful restraint, and breach of peace charges.

The 49-year-old New Jersey woman was charged after Connecticut State Police received a 911 call Aug. 4 from a New York woman who said she was locked inside the compartment of the Peter Pan bus while retrieving items from her bag.

Police found the woman when they pulled the bus over in Union, Conn.

Baber said his client's actions were unintentional.

Man keeps calling 911 to report roommate

FL DADE CITY — A Florida man repeatedly called 911 to report that his roommate had stolen his marijuana.

A deputy for the Pasco County Sheriff's Office posted a Twitter response to the man's calls Saturday night: Stop calling.

Deputy Neal Zalava said in the Twitter video that he called the man back to tell him to quit contacting the sheriff's office about his stolen marijuana.

Zalava recorded the video as part of the agency's #1TweetAlong

program, which allows viewers to get a behind-the-scenes look at the police work by the deputies.

Recreational marijuana use remains illegal in Florida. A sheriff's office spokesman said no charges were filed against the caller.

Abuse by fraternity members outlined

KS LAWRENCE — Newly released documents say that members of a now-suspended University of Kansas fraternity struck, urinated and spat on some new members who were suspected of cooperating with an investigation into hazing.

The Lawrence Journal-World reported that it obtained the heavily redacted documents about Delta Upsilon after filing a records request.

In July 2018, the university found the fraternity guilty of endangering new members during the fall 2017 semester. The documents show that the chapter's counsel didn't fight the hazing allegations during a hearing but argued that it wasn't as big of a deal as the university was making it out to be.

The hearing ended with the university suspending the fraternity from campus through the fall semester of 2023.

At the time, the Delta Upsilon International Fraternity had been planning to close the chapter and restart it later.

From wire reports

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Stay connected and hey, welcome to the neighborhood.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Workers cheer tentative GM deal

Associated Press

Detroit — On the picket lines at a General Motors transmission plant in Toledo, Ohio, passing cars honked and striking workers celebrated a tentative contract deal by munching on 10 pizzas dropped off by a supporter.

They had carried signs for 31 days and demonstrated the muscle. The United Auto Workers union still has over Detroit's three manufacturers.

Details of the four-year pact weren't released, but GM's latest offer to end the monthlong strike included wage increases and lump-sum payments, top-notch health insurance at little cost to workers, promises of new products for many U.S. factories and a path to full-time work for temporary workers.

That's a big difference from what GM wanted going into the talks to slash total labor costs at its factories, which are about \$13 per hour higher than at foreign automakers in the U.S.

Terry Dittes, the UAW's chief bargainer with GM, said the deal offers "major gains" for 49,000 union workers who have been walking picket lines since Sept. 16. They'll stay off work for at least a couple of more days while union committees decide if they will bless the deal. Then workers

will have to vote on it.

The deal shows that the union, with less than one-third of the 1.5 million members it had at its peak in 1979, still has a lot of clout with GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

"I think economically the UAW will do just fine in this agreement," said Art Schwartz, a former GM negotiator who now is a labor consultant in Michigan. "The union certainly still has power in this industry."

The strike immediately brought GM's U.S. factories to a halt, and within a week started to hamper production in Mexico and Canada. Analysts at KeyBanc investment services estimated the stoppage cut GM vehicle production by 250,000 to 300,000 vehicles. That's too much for the company to make up with overtime or increased assembly line speeds. Analysts say the costs to GM will hit around \$2 billion.

Workers, on the other hand, lost north of \$3,000 each on average, the difference between their base wages and \$250 per week in strike pay from the union.

"It's nice to see there's a deal, but without knowing the details I'm a little skeptical because we don't know the highlights or the lowlights," said worker Nick Kuhlman, who was among the strikers huddled around a burn

barron on a blustery, gray Toledo afternoon.

GM apparently was able to close three of four factories that it wanted to shutter to get rid of excess capacity in slow-selling cars and components. The Detroit-Hamtramck plant will get a new electric pickup truck and stay open, but factories in Lordstown, Ohio; Warren, Mich.; and near Baltimore are to be closed. The Lordstown area will get an electric vehicle battery factory, but it won't have nearly as many workers as the assembly plant that for years made compact GM cars.

The deal now will be used as a template for talks with GM's crosstown rivals, Ford and Fiat Chrysler. Normally the major provisions carry over to the other two companies and cover about 140,000 auto workers nationwide. It wasn't clear which company the union would bargain with next, or whether there would be another strike.

Schwartz said that depending on the contents, the GM contract could influence wages and benefits in other industries. But he said foreign automakers with U.S. factories, mainly in the South, will give modest pay raises regardless of the GM contract and shouldn't be affected much.

GM and the union have been



MATT ROURKE/AP

Picketing United Auto Workers members Richard Rivera, left, and Will Myatt react Wednesday to news of a tentative contract agreement with General Motors in Langhorne, Pa.

negotiating at a time of troubling uncertainty for the U.S. auto industry. Driven up by the longest economic expansion in American history, auto sales appear to have peaked and are now heading in the other direction. GM and other carmakers are also struggling to make the transition to electric and autonomous vehicles.

The strike had shut down 33 GM manufacturing plants in nine states across the U.S., and also took down factories in Canada and Mexico. It was the first national strike by the union since a two-day walkout in 2007, and the longest since a 54-day strike in Flint, Mich., in 1998.

EXCHANGE RATES

	Military rates	Commercial rates
Euro costs (Oct. 18)	\$1,1404	\$1,1404
Dollar buys (Oct. 18)	€0.8769	£1.2887
British pound (Oct. 18)	¥153.32	¥153.32
Japanese yen (Oct. 18)	106.00	106.00
Denmark (Krone) (Oct. 18)	1,156.00	1,156.00
Egypt (Pound)	16,2398	16,2398
Finland (Euro)	1,112,300	1,112,300
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7,8439	7,8439
Hungary (Forint)	297.62	297.62
Israel (Shekel)	3,5393	3,5393
Canada (Dollar)	1,3139	1,3139
China (Yuan)	109.59	109.59
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3035	0.3035
Norway (Krone)	9,1639	9,1639
Poland (Zlote)	51.32	51.32
Poland (2zloty)	3.88	3.88
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3,7598	3,7598
Singapore (Dollar)	1,1641	1,1641
South Korea (Won)	1,178.51	1,178.51
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9881	0.9881
Thailand (Baht)	.30.29	.30.29

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers of military banking units in the U.S. for Germany, Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking unit. Commercial rates are bank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currency to U.S. dollars, except for Poland, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

MARKET WATCH

Oct. 16, 2019

Dow Jones industrials	-22.82
	27,001.98
Nasdaq composite	-24.52
	8,124.18
Standard & Poor's 500	-5.99
	2,989.69
Russell 2000	1.76
	1,525.06

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers of military banking units in the U.S. for Germany, Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking unit. Commercial rates are bank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currency to U.S. dollars, except for Poland, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.00
Discount rate	2.50
Federal funds market rate	1.82
3-month bill	1.84
30-year bond	2.23

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

WEEKEND

Code Vein borrows heavily
but has distinct identity

Video games, Page 26

Touch of EVIL

'Maleficent' sequel gets darker
but not necessarily better
than the original

Profile, Page 24
Review, Page 25

WEEKEND: GADGETS



IGDB/TNS

Even though it's been around for a decade, Minecraft is making a comeback.

Digging into an old favorite

Sandbox builder Minecraft seeing a spike in popularity

By TEDDY AMENABAR
The Washington Post

Minecraft is more than a decade old, but it's doing something you don't often see with video games: It's making a comeback in popularity.

Over the summer, Minecraft spiked on Twitch, according to a third-party analytics site. Channels streaming the game were bringing in four times the audience compared to just a few months before. Creators on YouTube are riding the same wave, telling *The Washington Post* that they've noticed an upswing in the views to their Minecraft-related videos.

There has been a steady drumbeat of attention for the sandbox builder. Mojang, the company behind the game, released two major updates in the past year or so. It's also working on two new offshoots of the original game. One is an augmented-reality experience for your phone (think *Pokemon Go*) and the other, *Minecraft Dungeon*, is an RPG similar to *Diablo*.

Swedish YouTube creator PewDiePie returned to Minecraft in June, bringing with him one of the largest audiences on the platform. He has already posted more than 100 Minecraft-themed videos. Some of the biggest Fortnite streamers are even swinging their pickax. Depending on how you play, some streamers have said Minecraft can be a welcome respite from the grinding gameplay of battles royal.

"Everyone has kind of been starved when it comes to creativity, and Minecraft allows them to sort of express that," professional Fortnite streamer Ali "Myth" Kabani recently told *The Post*. "It's a nice break from the usual."

If you're looking to return to mining or maybe create a new world for the first time, *The Post* talked with two YouTube creators — Preston Arsement of *PrestonPlayz* and Tyler Pappas of *logdotzip* — and asked for their advice.

Pick an edition — Bedrock or Java.

First, there are two slightly different versions of the main game — Bedrock and Java.

Java is the original version. It remains a hub for hobbyists who want to modify the game in their own custom servers. Minecraft, at its core, is an incredibly flexible game. People have created servers to play versions of *Pokemon*. There are countless libraries online for Minecraft enthusiasts to play and alter older versions of the game.

Bedrock is the multipurpose edition of Mine-

craft, which allows players to mine with friends on other devices — phones, consoles, etc. In Bedrock, rather than adding lines of code to modify the game, there's a setup marketplace for the community.

"The marketplace is basically this thriving ecosystem that takes the best of user-generated content and lets the player base purchase it," Pappas said.

Bedrock is probably the future of the franchise with its cross-platform capabilities, while Java is the tried-and-true edition for some hardcore fans.

Find your village people: If you're starting a new survival world in Minecraft, Pappas' recommendation is to get to the nearest village.

Villages will provide a roof over your head and an empty bed for those dark early days. You can live off their crops and use the towns as a home base, at least until you build a house of your own.

Once you're on your own two feet, Pappas said you should make use of the utility blocks around town — even "borrow" a few to place in your future home. Grindstones, smokers, stone cutters and other utility blocks are all available for players to forge new items or craft more efficiently.

One update from Mojang has expanded on how and what you can trade with villagers. If you make the most of it, trading can become a simple way to get your hands on rare items, Pappas said. Protect the villagers from the aptly named "pillagers," a new spawn in the game that will attack in coordinated raids, and you'll get better deals in trades with the townspeople.

Go for a swim, play with animals: You could always swim in Minecraft, but a year ago Mojang provided a reason to explore the ocean depths with an Aquatic update. There are sunken ships, treasure maps, tridents and, yes, underwater zombies. You can build your next humble abode underwater, Pappas said.

While you're down there, swim with the dolphins or the puffer fish. Speaking of both, Minecraft now has more than your typical farm animals in the game — with bees, pandas, turtles and foxes that huddle into their own tail for a quick nap.

"Minecraft is a very relaxing game," Pappas said. "It's got lovely piano music in the background. Fun cute animals to look at. There's no impetus to kill everyone and get first place, and I think that resonates with a lot of people," Pappas said, referring to Fortnite and other battle royal games.

GADGET WATCH

Ring in seasonal spirit

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

They're creepy and they're kooky and now the first family of Halloween, the Addams Family, is at your doorstep. Well, sort of. If you have a Ring Video Doorbell, you can download and install the iconic theme song/ring-chime to play when your Ring doorbell is pressed to activate.

I have several Ring devices already in use, so in my Ring app, I chose my video doorbell and then went to device settings, alert settings and then to app alert tones, which gave me the Addams Family choice along with others including bats, creepy laugh and many others.

The free Addams Family tones will be available through November. A special edition Ring Halloween interchangeable faceplate for Ring Video Doorbell 2 is on sale for \$15.

Online: ring.com

The new Airtime Pro truly wireless ergonomic stem earbuds from iFrogz are an adorable, effective gadget.

The earbuds are loaded with great features, but what's most important is the sound, which is right on. Highs, lows and the right amount of bass are there, broadcasting from 5 mm drivers. I place a high priority on comfort and clear sound, which I get from the Airtime Pro.

With the stem feature, the extended hardware hangs down a bit (similar to Apple AirPods) which makes them a little more secure and comfortable.

Controls are built into the earbuds and are accessed with simple taps to play or pause music, control volume, select tracks, answer crystal-clear hands-free calls with the integrated mics on each earbud; three taps will get you in touch with Google Assistant.

They feature USB-C charging with 20 total hours of battery life with the included charging/storage case. They are IPX4 sweat resistant making them great for yard work, biking or workouts; Bluetooth 5.0 and automatic pairing mode are done right from the case after the initial pairing.

With iFrogz's Earbud Tips for Life limited lifetime warranty, if your earbud tips (not the speak-



RING/TNS

A special edition Ring Halloween interchangeable faceplate for Ring Video Doorbell 2 is currently available for \$15.

ers) get worn or damaged, they will replace them. The actual earbuds come with a one-year warranty to cover defective materials and workmanship and IFROGZ will replace or exchange them at no charge.

Online: [\\$69.99, available in black, blue or white](http://zagg.com)

Trek Bicycle has announced its most advanced family of electric e-Bikes with the launch of the Allant+.

It's touted as the perfect e-Bike for commuting in a healthier and more environmentally friendly option or just everyday riding.

Allant+ is available in both OCLV Carbon and Alpha Aluminum frame options and features Bosch Performance Line CX for speeds up to 20 mph or Performance Line Speed motors for up to 28 mph.

Also, they include Trek's exclusive removable Integrated battery system, which fully encases the long-range 500Wh or 625Wh Bosch battery within the frame for sleek looks and tool-free, drive-side battery access.

The e-Bikes have a SmartphoneHub controller to transform a rider's smartphone into their onboard computer. Once riders download Bosch's COBI bike app they can charge up, make or take calls, listen to music, get turn-by-turn directions, and more, all from the ease of the handlebar. The SmartphoneHub will also display critical ride info even when a phone isn't attached.

Among the many other features of smart integrated accessories are fenders, a rear rack and automatic lighting systems powered by the Bosch battery. Pricing ranges from \$3,599.99 to \$5,999.99.

Online: trekbikes.com



TREK/TNS

Trek's Allant+

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Taking a bite out of binge watching

New streaming platforms such as Apple TV+ leading return to one-episode-per-week release schedule

MEREDITH BLAKE AND YVONNE VILLARREAL
Los Angeles Times

After years of buildup, Apple will make its long-awaited push into original programming with the Nov. 1 launch of its streaming service, Apple TV+. Easily its most anticipated series is "The Morning Show," starring Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon as journalists caught in the maelstrom when the popular anchor of a morning news program, played by Steve Carell, is fired for sexual misconduct.

With its A-list cast, lavish production values, acclaimed creative team and timely, provocative subject matter, "The Morning Show" might have been created in a streaming TV lab — with one exception.

Viewers eager to consume the show will have to pace themselves: Apple TV+ will make three episodes of the series available immediately, but the remaining seven will be released weekly.

As the number of original series grows and four new streaming platforms prepare to enter the market, the scramble to stand out has led key players to lean away from releasing full seasons at once — a model introduced by Netflix — if not wholly abandon it.

Having had roughly six years to figure out how to attract TV viewers trained to feast on content, none of the streaming services set to debut between now and next spring will be exclusively adopting the binge model, and veterans like Netflix, Amazon and Hulu have tried different release strategies themselves.

Which raises the question: Is this the end of the binge?

Hardly. But while these new platforms have changed the face of television, they're not ditching the traditional rule book entirely.

Disney+, launching Nov. 12, will release episodes weekly. Apple TV+ will take the same hybrid approach with "See" and "For All Mankind" as it will with "The Morning Show," while "Dickinson" will be dropped en masse. HBO Max, expected in the spring, is also unlikely to adopt the "binge and burn" approach, according to a source with knowledge of the situation. Even Netflix is experimenting with releasing select reality titles and talk shows on a different schedule.

Appointment viewing might seem old-fashioned, but week-to-week anticipation and strong word of mouth helped propel the growth of recent shows like HBO's "Succession" and "Chernobyl." It turns out if you want a "watercooler" show, it helps to be in the room at the same time.

While new seasons of some streaming series — Netflix's "Stranger Things" and "The Crown," Amazon Prime's "Fleabag" — feel like events that command the cultural conversation, the binge model means that even the buzz around breakout shows drops off quickly. The most recent season of "Stranger Things" netted 8.2 million Twitter mentions its first week of release in July; by its fifth, there was a drop in mentions of more than 90%. (The major streaming services release viewership numbers selectively, if at all.)

It's also become harder to break through the noise in the first place: TV is booming, with nearly 500 original series in 2018 according to research by FX. This may be especially true of quirkier, under-the-radar shows dependent on word of mouth, such as the animated comedy "Tuca & Bertie," which was abruptly canceled by Netflix in July — less than three months after its debut. It was one of the best reviewed shows of the year, but by the time many viewers were inspired to sample it, its fate had been sealed.

And evidence suggests that binged shows don't linger as long in viewers' minds. In a 2017 study, researchers at the University of Melbourne found that people who watched all six hour-long episodes of the Cold War drama "The Game" in a single sitting retained less information in the long run — and may have enjoyed the show less — than viewers who packed their consumption over weeks or days.

Shows that follow a more traditional week-to-week release can often benefit from the measured build of a season spanning months. The HBO limited series "Chernobyl" became an unlikely hit this spring, thanks largely to positive buzz that reached deafening levels over the course of its five-week run.

According to Twitter, mentions of the series grew tenfold between its May debut and

June finale. The show's same-day ratings also grew by more than 50%, from 1.2 million to 1.9 million viewers on Monday nights. "Succession," which ended its second season on Sunday, has also benefited from a more traditional release pattern (not to mention its outsize popularity with media professionals).

Even as it moves on from "Game of Thrones," mourned by many as "the last show everyone watched together," HBO plans to stick with the weekly rollout.

"Why would you give up the weekly episode release?" programming president Casey Bloys told The Times in August. "To have people united watching and talking about these shows. To give the audience numerous chances to connect."

But shows released on a more traditional timeline also benefit from being available on demand and in bulk, so that when a friend — or TV critic — recommends a show, viewers can catch up easily. According to HBO, once delayed viewing was factored in, the average audience for each episode of "Chernobyl" rose to 12.9 million viewers, meaning the overwhelming majority of the show's audience was watching on demand or through one of HBO's streaming platforms.

A number of streaming players are testing multiple release strategies. CBS All Access, which programs series such as "Star Trek: Discovery," mostly uses a weekly strategy, but it has applied the binge format selectively, dropping all episodes of the cop comedy "No Activity" and the upcoming true crime series "Interrogation" at once.

"It fits the nature of our consumer base and our history," said Marc DeBevoise, president and COO of CBS Interactive. "It allows us to show our creators that we are extending our marketing plan, that we are supporting the shows throughout a few episodes. The binge is always there if the viewer wants to wait until the end."

Hulu, a pioneer in the pace yourself approach — often releasing two or three episodes at launch, then one per week — has made binge-release exceptions for certain shows, such as its "Veronica Mars" reboot.

"We went from a world where consumers didn't know anything but weekly to this new model where they could binge it all, and now we're seeing this sort of the hybrid mode," said Ryan Crosby, Hulu's vice president of content and brand marketing. "We're not in a spot where we can force them to engage in a certain way."

Neflix itself has deviated from the binge model with certain genres, beginning with talk shows like "Patriot Act With Hasan Minhaj" and David Letterman's "My Next Guest Needs No Introduction."

"Rhythm + Flow," in which judges Cardi B, T.I. and Chance the Rapper search for the next great hip-hop star, will be released in multi-episode batches. It's Netflix's first attempt at a music competition show in the vein of "American Idol" or "The Voice" — a format that relies on building anticipation for the moment when the winner is revealed.

It "will be enough to satisfy the binge-watcher while still protecting the identity of the winner" and build word of mouth, predicts executive producer Jeff Gaspin, who helped develop unsung hits like "The Biggest Loser," reruns of which often aired in cable-TV marathons, and the once-ubiquitous "Behind the Music."

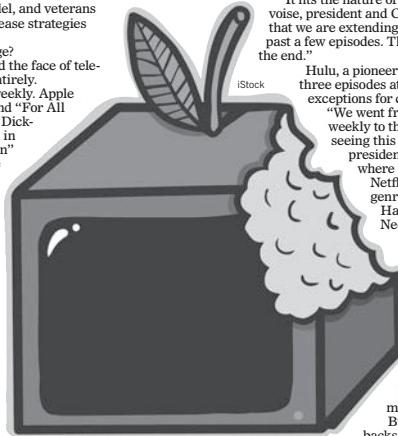
But dropping entire seasons at once also has potential drawbacks, Gaspin said. "If people don't discover a show quickly, it could also go away rather quickly. If the algorithm doesn't keep recycling it and it's no longer one of the first shows you see when you turn on your service, it's out of sight, out of mind."

Of course, there's no putting the genie — or, in this case, binge-trained viewers — back in the bottle. And for storytellers, knowing that many viewers will likely sit through more than one episode at a time has narrative benefits.

"There's less time reminding people about what happened in the previous episode," said Bruce Miller, showrunner of Hulu's dystopian drama "The Handmaid's Tale." "We're more committed to giving people their hour's worth. We try to make episodes fully packed."

"I'm not into binge-viewing. I think the reason people are so in love with 'Game of Thrones' and shows like that is you are building a relationship with those shows," Sherman-Palladino said. "It's like, 'Don't call me, don't want to know you during this hour or whatever that I'm watching my show.'"

Added Palladino: "Whatever the case, people now consume it the way they want. That's how to stay."



None of the streaming services set to debut between now and next spring will be exclusively adopting the binge model, and veterans like Netflix, Amazon and Hulu have tried different release strategies themselves. Which raises the question: Is this the end of the binge?

Still, many showrunners have deep reverence for the slower, traditional week-to-week release, including Miller and Amy Sherman-Palladino and Dan Palladino, the showrunners of Amazon's "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel."

"I'm not into binge-viewing. I think the reason people are so in love with 'Game of Thrones' and shows like that is you are building a relationship with those shows," Sherman-Palladino said. "It's like, 'Don't call me, don't want to know you during this hour or whatever that I'm watching my show.'"

Added Palladino: "Whatever the case, people now consume it the way they want. That's how to stay."

WEEKEND: MOVIES



RELATABLE ROLE

Maleficent doubts her fitness as a mother. So did Angelina Jolie

By CHRISTI CARRAS
Los Angeles Times

Maleficent is many things. Angelina Jolie is not: a flame-throwing fairy, an orphaned outcast, a winged warrior. But the "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" star can relate to her title character on some level, especially when it comes to motherhood.

"Where she fails is that she doesn't believe in herself," Jolie told reporters at the Disney sequel's Hollywood premiere at El Capitan Theatre on Sept. 30. "She doesn't believe that she's a good mom. She doesn't see herself as a mom. But I think I questioned, when I was first a mother, whether I was good enough. And I think that a lot of good moms question whether or not they're good enough. And I think that there's nothing wrong with that."

It may come as a surprise that Jolie, a mother of six — and who also brought to life "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" as a producer — ever doubted her nurturing capabilities.

But in the franchise's latest installment, Maleficent faces similar anxieties, afraid she might lose her newly engaged goddaughter Aurora (Elle Fanning) to heartbreak and nefarious forces. The tale is a complex portrait of a woman — actually, three women — when you include Fanning and Michelle Pfeiffer.

"There are many different types of strength represented for women in this film," Jolie said. "It's not just the strength of a fighter. It's the strength of a tactician in Michelle, and a leader. It's the strength of a mother and wife — mother-to-be and wife — in someone like Elle, who

'... I think I questioned, when I was first a mother, whether I was good enough. And I think that a lot of good moms question whether or not they're good enough. And I think that there's nothing wrong with that.'

Angelina Jolie

is soft, and her strength is in her heart and her softness ... all of these things are different aspects of women. We're very complicated."

Further complicated is the rocky relationship between the witch and the princess, which has seen significant change in the years since the first film hit theaters in 2014. But behind the scenes, Fanning revealed she and her on-screen fairy godmother have only grown closer.

"I was 14 when I did the first movie, so you can't really talk about the same things that we can talk about now, and our bond has ... gotten so strong, and the advice that I feel she's given me, and what I've learned from her," the 21-year-old actress told The Times. "I really do truly, genuinely feel that love between us and that I could reach out to her at any moment."

Just added to the mix of female power was Pfeiffer as Queen Ingrith, who faces off against Jolie's horned sorceress in a struggle to claim parenthood of Aurora. Pfeiffer, who hadn't met Jolie prior to filming despite both being industry veterans, "relished" the opportunity to join the franchise's on-set sisterhood.

"When we did the end battle, we were stuck up on this tower for a long, long time," she told The Times. "It was nice because it was just Angelina and Elle and I, and so ... I got to know them both more, and [we] just hung out."

Jolie also made sure to credit the men of "Maleficent," such as director Joachim Ronning, co-writers Michael Fitzgerald,

Blue and Noah Harpster, and actor Chiwetel Ejiofor, with allowing their female colleagues' strengths to flourish. The feeling was mutual for Ejiofor, who plays a new character, a dark fairy named Conall.

"[Jolie] just brings such a complete, just everything to it — this real, all-encompassing energy and real knowledge of what she wants to do," he told The Times. "Her projects really do represent her worldview ... I admire her so hugely as an actress but also as a force in the world."

A force, indeed: A running theme ahead of the screening was Jolie's immense influence on the film, which seemed to reach as far as Maleficent's enveloping wingspan — from its fantastical costumes to its girl-powered soundtrack.

"She's pushing everyone around her to be the absolute best," Ronning told The Times. "It was in every part of the process ... spending months with the screenwriters, getting it right. The angle of her horns, of course, the wardrobe, the color of her lips — hours and hours of relentless hard work."

Come the next "Maleficent," Ronning may be out of a job, as Jolie told reporters her next ambition is directing, and she's already begun to think like a visionary. Like any committed mother — or producer — Jolie always had the final say. And all agreed the story was better for it.

"We'd write her some line of dialogue that we thought would really kill, and she would say, 'You know what? I think I'll do that with a look,'" Fitzgerald-Blue said. "And she can."

"Maleficent: Mistress of Evil," starring, from top left: Elle Fanning, Angelina Jolie and Sam Riley, picks up several years after "Maleficent" and explores complex family ties.

DISNEY/AP, top, and GRANT POLLARD, INVISION/AP, above

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Chaos ensues

'Maleficent: Mistress of Evil' underutilizes Jolie, undermines important themes with goofy camp

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

It seems that Angelina Jolie's current pet cause is rehabilitating the image of notorious "Sleeping Beauty" villain and evil fairy Maleficent. The 2014 live-action stand-alone film positioned the curse-bearing mistress of evil as a misunderstood and abused guardian of the natural world and all the magic it contains. There's certainly something interesting and lovely about finding empathy and compassion for this otherwise maligned creature. And while "Maleficent" wasn't exactly a great movie, Jolie was certainly fun to watch. In the follow-up, "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil," things devolve into kooky as this wild, surreal and wacky escalation spins out of control and our leading lady fades to the background. In the sequel, penned by Micael Fitzgerald-Blue, Noah Harpster and original screenwriter Linda Woolverton, Maleficent is forced out of the Moors and into war as her goddaughter, Aurora (Elle Fanning), plans to marry Prince Philip (Harris Dickinson), merging the fairy and human kingdoms. Of course there's only one real problem: her future mother-in-law. Typical.

Michelle Pfeiffer plays the icy Queen Ingrith, whose slinky side-eye delivery screams that she's definitely up to something. It's fun watching Pfeiffer and Jolie out-dua each other over a spiky family dinner, but for the most part, the film keeps them apart. While Ingrith schemes and plots in her castle, Maleficent gets to know her roots with a trip to the land of the "dark fae," where she finally encounters her people and learns her true power.

What worked about the first "Maleficent" was Jolie herself, trying on something softer, even funny, her face, enhanced with prosthetics, half of

the visual spectacle. But "Mistress of Evil" crowds Jolie. Maleficent fades to the background, eclipsed by full-camp Pfeiffer as the evil, triumphant dictator queen, an unholy combination of Slobodan Milošević and Imelda Marcos. Equally distracting are the dark fae, led by an outlandish Ed Skrein in full winged, ab-leaving indigenous drag. The mind reels at the thought that Jolie is the least interesting person on screen.

Much of the appeal of "Maleficent" and "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" is the visual spectacle, where humans mingle with computer-generated animals and fairies in a fantastical landscape. But director Joachim Ronning, who also directed "Kon-Tiki" and "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales," badly bungles this. The shots are confounding and messy, and the whole thing is too quickly edited. Far too many scenes take place under the cloak of darkness, so dark you can barely tell who is who. Chiwetel Ejiofor has a whole character arc as peace-loving dark fae Conall, not that you could ever tell it was him under the dreads, horns, makeup and dim lighting.

Ronning somehow saves it with a visually inventive battle scene, punctuated with puffs of red smoke, but this is where the script veers off the rails. Too much happens, all the time, with a great many different tones battling on the screen. It's a little bit like "A Princess Bride" and a lot like "Fern Gully" with heavy metaphors for violent colonization and the genocide of native people under a greedy, fascist government laced throughout. The messages that undergird "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" are important ones. If only they didn't come wrapped in this goofy, chaotic package.

"Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" is rated PG for intense sequences of fantasy action/violence and brief scary images. Running time: 118 minutes.

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

Director Joachim Ronning imbues the complex story with a fittingly frenetic pace and energy, and despite its fairy tale structure, Jolie and Pfeiffer endow their characters with believable human emotions and frailties.

— Laura DeMarco
The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer

The movie overcomplicates itself. Instead of aiming for the elemental simplicity of a fairy tale, "Mistress of Evil" fills itself with the politics and detail of the fairy-human struggle.

— Jake Coyle
Associated Press

"Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" isn't a great movie; with its flat dialogue, overblown battles and cloying CGI critters, it's not even a particularly good one. But it's also not without its pleasures.

— Justin Chang
Los Angeles Times

'Zombieland: Double Tap' brings its outdated shtick back from the dead

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

For years, people have wondered why 2009's smash zom-com "Zombieland" never had a sequel. Ruben Fleischer's feature directorial debut put him on the map and firmly established the postmodern zombie craze as a pop phenomenon that shows no signs of stopping. It cemented Emma Stone and Jesse Eisenberg as legitimate stars and even gave Woody Harrelson a mid-career boost. Since then, Eisenberg and Harrelson have been nominated for Oscars, and Stone has won one. Fleischer and writers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick have found box office success shepherding the Marvel Comics superheroes "Venom" and "Deadpool."

So the really weird thing about this sequel, which reunites the original stars and filmmakers, is it imagines a world where the past decade never happened.



COLUMBIA PICTURES/TNS

"Zombieland: Double Tap" stars, from left: Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Abigail Breslin and Emma Stone.

It feels like a movie that's been sealed in a vault for 10 years, lost to time, waiting for cinematic archaeologists to liberate the dusty old relic from its tomb. A character wears a Juicy Couture tracksuit and no one comments on it, for crying out loud. Sure, she's been trapped alone in a mall, but the film ignores the op-

portunity to mine the time lapse for real laughs.

"Zombieland: Double Tap" positions Eisenberg as the nerd who gets the girl despite being unforgivably self-involved. Stone is in full snarky cool girl "Superbad" mode, side bangs and all. Watching this film is like experiencing an alternate universe

where the stars never grew up (despite Abigail Breslin's best efforts) and neither did the humor. But the world changed. The audience changed. This slapdash cash-grab sequel is not nostalgic, but in a word, a tax.

We find the fearsome foursome of Tallahassee (Harrelson), Columbus (Eisenberg), Wichita (Stone) and Little Rock (Breslin) playing house in the White House when we catch up with them. Columbus quickly gets us up to speed, reminding us of his endless zombie survival rules, while Fleischer reminds us of his self-reflective on-screen text tic. Although Columbus wants to settle down with his woman, Wichita, watching the odd family tiff messily around the Oval Office isn't all that interesting, so Wichita and Little Rock take off. When Wichita returns with the news that Little Rock absconded to Graceland with a pacifist hippie, Berkeley (Avan Jogia), the

group gives chase. Tagging along is Columbus' new love interest, airhead mallrat Madison (Zoe Deutch), whom Columbus tries to angle between himself and Wichita to spark her jealousy.

Along with zombie heads, "Double Tap" bludgeons the stale jokes about minivans and ditzy blondes to goo. Deutch and Jogia give their all to the tired stereotypes with which they're saddled, while the rest of the crew fuss and whine about their love lives. The plot only perks up when new elements are introduced, like a pair of doppelgängers, Albuquerque (Luke Wilson) and Flagstaff (Thomas Middleditch), who appear all too briefly, and a fun moment with Rosario Dawson driving a monster truck. But it feels like any new ideas were jettisoned for the same old shtick.

"Zombieland: Double Tap" is rated R for violence, language throughout, some drug and sexual content. Running time: 99 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Code Vein focuses on a society of vampire-like beings called revanants that are closed off from the world. Players will encounter several different enemy types and will require different strategies to take them on.

Bandai Namco photos

More than a clone

By GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

Difficulty has always been a barrier for Dark Souls. The franchise's intimidating reputation is a turn-off for gamers who don't see the joy in "getting good." That's a shame, really, because the series shines once players shatter those challenging roadblocks.

The game reveals its depth and transforms players as they learn the values of patience and persistence. Although Bandai Namco's latest project, *Code Vein*, has a Dark Souls-type vibe, the developer tweaks the formula to make it more approachable. The team removes the rigidity of the systems and mitigates the punishing aspects of the modern classic.

All those changes give *Code Vein* a distinct identity that makes it easier to step into its grim postapocalyptic world. The campaign takes place after the Great Collapse, a disaster spurred by enormous thorns that ripped apart the earth. Horrors emerged from the event and humanity had to create vampire-like beings called revanants to combat them. They're essentially dead people who have been resurrected via a parasite.

Revanants have special abilities and can revive from mortal wounds, but that power comes at a cost: The sci-fi vampires

lose their memories and also need blood to survive, otherwise they'll devolve into monsters called the Lost. Amid this bleak environment, players take on the role of a special revenant who has the ability to absorb the talents of other vampires while also clearing the miasma poisoning the world.

The revenant joins up with a ragtag group that is trying to make the fractured world a better place. That involves venturing into dungeons and eliminating the miasma that limits travel and defeating the Lost and Horrors that patrol.

Compared to Dark Souls, the plot is straightforward as players delve into the mysteries of *Code Vein*. They'll uncover the world's rich history and the murky past of the protagonist and the companions. The partners who venture with players is a major departure and one that makes the game less lonely.

A partner eases the difficulty and helps players bond with the supporting cast. The companions revive players when they lose their health and they add a dose of damage to tough boss fights. It makes the campaign manageable, though *Code Vein*

Code Vein borrows from Dark Souls and tweaks some less-forgiving aspects of the classic game

can still be difficult. Bosses still hit hard, and those foolish enough to button mash will quickly be frustrated.

The beauty in *Code Vein* is that it lets players adapt quickly to their situations. Because players can change the protagonist's class, they can switch roles depending on the enemy. In one fight, melee attacks would open up players to poison, so instead, attacking from a distance would be more effective. Other times, players will discover it's better to dodge a heavy-hitting boss rather than go toe to toe with it. They may even change their class to work better with a partner.

Code Vein offers plenty of opportunities to experiment with loadouts. Players can figure out which abilities work best with a class and companion. The number of options is overwhelming at first, but after venturing through a few dungeons, players will get a handle on what works best.

The only issue is that combat feels too cumbersome at times. Part of that comes from the complexity of the system, which includes light and heavy attacks on top of parry and block moves. On top of that, players have to deal with a draw button that lets them gain Ichor, which is vital to using powers, and a focus meter that empowers the protagonist and opens up a launching move.

It's a lot to take in, and players will find some moves superfluous in the heat of

combat. At times, players can luck into a drain attack or their partner can carry them to victory. This removes the white-knuckle tension of boss fights, but it's a sacrifice *Code Vein* makes to push a feeling of collaboration and teamwork in the campaign.

That feeling of fellowship shows up in the partner banter as players explore the labyrinthine level design. They'll call out dangerous areas and offer advice in others. The developers succeed in giving players zones that requires different tactics. Dodging won't be smart along narrow cliff faces, but it is more acceptable in wide-open spaces. Other times, they're presented with big areas, but they're shrouded in fog raising the specter of ambushes. For the most part, the maps are smartly designed and borrow much from the intertwining layout of Dark Souls.

Although *Code Vein* borrows heavily from the genre-defining classic, the project does a lot to push a distinct identity. It's a perfect title for those curious about Dark Souls, but didn't want to deal with the frustrating gameplay. *Code Vein* is more accommodating and features story with enough intrigue and a core mystery will keep players venturing into its challenging depths.

Platforms: PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC
Online: en.bandainamcoent.eu/code-vein



WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe



Far left: Gaudy ceiling lead to what could be Dracula's tomb in the corner of a cloister at the Church of Santa Maria la Nova in Naples, Italy.

Left: Dramatic religious scenes are embedded within the visually dense murals in the walkways at the church.

Below: The main altar is adorned with agate, lapis lazuli, jasper and lazulite. Completed between 1805 and 1806, it is one of many examples of the ornate artwork inside the church.

PHOTOS BY SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes



Count me in

Church of Santa Maria la Nova in Naples could house tomb of the real-life Dracula

By SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

The headless body of Vlad the Impaler, aka Dracula, may have been interred more than half a millennium ago at the Church of Santa Maria la Nova in the center of the Sicilian city of Naples, some scholars say.

Vlad was a 15th century Transylvanian prince who is said to have killed as many as 20,000 of his enemies by impaling them on stakes in the ground and leaving them to die. Legend has it that he was beheaded in 1476 by an Ottoman patrol in present-day Romania, and his head was taken to Constantinople.

But his burial place was unknown. Vlad was long thought to have been interred at a monastery near Bucharest, but excavations there in 1933 found no tomb beneath the unmarked grave thought

to be his.

Some scholars have hypothesized that the aristocrat María Balsa, possibly Vlad's daughter, fled to Naples with his remains and put them in a marble sarcophagus in the church.

Bram Stoker, the Irish author who wrote the book "Dracula," which was inspired by Vlad, lived in Naples in 1875. Maybe he visited Vlad's tomb in the church?

With or without Dracula's tomb, the church is worth a visit. It has 16 chapels, two courtyards and a refectory. The upper section now houses municipal offices.

Built in the 13th century, the church was heavily renovated in the late 1500s after being battered by earthquakes and an explosion from the nearby St. Elmo Castle. Its highlights include an ornate main altar, a gilded ceiling and a slew of Renaissance frescoes.

And, of course, there's what

might be Dracula's tomb. The engravings on the tomb better fit Vlad than the Italian noble who has long been thought to be entombed there. The main emblem is the seal for the Order of the Dragon, to which Vlad's father belonged. (Dracula means son of the dragon.) Two paired dolphins may refer to the coat of arms of Dobruja, Romania, where Vlad won a battle against the Ottomans. And a scholar has decoded an encrypted epigraph behind the tomb as "Blad" — roughly Vlad — and "Balkan."

Heat mysteriously radiates from the tomb. You can feel it.

How incongruous it would be if Vlad really does lie buried in Santa Maria la Nova — a murderous ruler who inspired an unholy literary figure entombed at a site of religious devotion.

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ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Address: Via Santa Maria la Nova 44, Naples, Italy

TIMES

9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

COSTS

Free

INFORMATION

Parking: Available at streetside and nearby parking garages.
Phone: +39 081 552 1597
Web: The Visitnaples.eu website has a page devoted to the church and Dracula's supposed tomb.
Online: tinyurl.com/yylm56x

— Scott Wyland

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Take the stairs to the most insightful views

From church domes to bell towers, fanciful rooftops to sky-piercing monuments, Europe is full of climbable structures. While most lead to impressive views, the best also offer insights into the historical, artistic and religious thinking of their times.

In Milan, a highlight is strolling the rooftop of the city's cathedral (duomo) and the third-largest church in Europe. After taking the stairs or elevator to the top, visitors can climb up and down the roof's multiple terraces, wandering among gargoyles, statues and frilly spires.

Each of the church's 135 spires is similar, yet different. Climbing through the forest of these lovingly decorated spires, it's inspiring to think that every detail — each flower, saint's face and so on — is an individual work of art carved out of pink marble centuries ago by artists who believed that few would ever see it. Their art was a gift for God to enjoy from the heavens.

Another worthwhile climb is to the top of the dome at Florence's Duomo. Though it was built when the Gothic style dominated Europe, the Florentines decided not to cap their cathedral with a spire, leaving it with a gaping hole while waiting for technology to catch up with the city's vision for a dome instead. In 1420, Filippo Brunelleschi won the job and built the dome that kicked off the architectural Renaissance.

Brunelleschi's dome, which inspired the U.S. Capitol and St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, showed how art and science could be combined to make beauty. Today, it rewards those who climb the 463 steps, narrow steps with glorious views. Along the way, climbers are treated to a close-up of the dome's Last Judgment ceiling painting, a grand view of the cathedral's interior and a look at Brunelleschi's "dome-within-a-dome" construction. Because the dome climb is so popular, reservations are required.

A thoroughly different and modern

dome climb is the hike to the top of the Reichstag in Berlin. Completed in the late 19th century, the German parliament building was gutted by a mysterious fire and World War II bombs, then stood like a ghost, barely repaired, through the Cold War. But after German reunification, this historic ruin was rebuilt with a modern element: a striking glass dome.

A walkway winds all the way to the top, providing 360-degree views. Climbers see forests of skyscrapers interspersed with historic sights, such as the nearby Brandenburg Gate and the Berlin Cathedral's massive copper dome.

But for Germans, mindful of their dark 20th-century history, the sight that matters most is inside, looking down through a skylight to see over the shoulders of their legislators. The architecture comes with a poignant message: The people are determined to keep a wary eye on their government. And the dome is so popular that reservations are required to climb it.

Ascending the Eiffel Tower is one of Europe's great travel thrills. Built for the 1889 World's Fair, the project celebrated the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution.

Smart travelers book their tower visit months in advance. Even with a reservation, many stand in long lines to take the elevators up and down. For hardy visitors, it's cheaper and less crowded to climb the stairs. It's quite a hike — 720 steps up to the second level (the top level is only accessible via elevator) — so I prefer to take the stairs down. It takes minutes, and it gives you an up-close look at Gustave Eiffel's amazing engineering.

Perhaps the most memorable climb I've done in Europe was just 28 steps — on



Rick Steves



Photos by Dominic Arizona Bonuccelli

The top of Florence's famous dome is encircled by a tiny terrace that rewards climbers with fine views over the city.

my knees — up Rome's Scala Santa (Holy Stairs) next to the Church of San Giovanni in Laterano. In AD 326, Emperor Constantine's mother brought home what was reputed to be the marble steps of Pontius Pilate's residence in Jerusalem. Jesus is said to have climbed these steps on the day he was sentenced to death. Today, the steps are covered with wooden slats to protect the marble, but they're spotted with glass-covered holes to show stains from Jesus' blood on the original stairs.

For centuries, pilgrims have ascended the Scala Sancta on their knees while reciting a litany of prayers. And for decades, I watched them. But finally one year, a voice inside me said "Do it!" and I tried the climb myself. With my knees screaming and a fresco of a crucified Christ high above, I climbed each step, learning about both the bone structure of my knees and



At the Reichstag in Berlin, visitors are treated to endless vistas as they spiral up the 80-foot-high glass dome.

the value of pain when praying.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Long Night of Museums in Munich

Munich marks the 20th anniversary of its Long Night of Museums event on Saturday with the same winning formula it's always used — late-night openings in landmark buildings combined with cultural programs and participatory activities.

More than 90 museums, collections, galleries, churches and historically and architecturally significant buildings will keep their doors open late into the night. Along with heavy hitters such as the Deutsche Museum, Alter Pinakothek and Pinakothek der Moderne link lesser-known entities such as the Beer and Oktoberfest Museum and the Museum of Five Continents. This year's crop of possible experiences includes a virtual reality-assisted trip through 7,000 years of Bavarian history on the TimeRide or checking out light installations reminiscent of angels. Fans of classic autos love the "Rolling Museum," the opportunity to hitch a ride in a beautiful or quirky vehicle from a stop by the Museumsinsel.

Venues are linked by means of six shuttle bus routes, all of



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

which begin from Odeonsplatz. Here, at the hub of the night's activities, an information stand will sell tickets and help visitors orient themselves.

Kids also can immerse themselves in the city's museum landscape, with activities from 2 to 6 p.m. such as origami folding, drumming and a lithography workshop at 17 museums and venues. Participation for up to four children ages 4-14 is included in the cost of the standard Long Night ticket.

The Long Night of Museums begins at 7 p.m. Oct. 19 and ends at 2 a.m. the following day. A

15-euro "Kombiticket" grants admission to all venues and is also valid for use of shuttle buses and the MVV Munich public transportation network. Online: muenchner.de/museumsnacht

Can't make it to Munich on short notice? Museums at Night is an initiative through which museums and galleries across the UK stay open late over the weekend of Oct. 31-Nov. 2. Dates planned in 2020 include those in Basel, Switzerland, on Jan. 17, Brussels on March 14 and Stuttgart on March 21.

Horror film fests

For spine-tingling thrills, not much beats your classic horror flick, and film festivals offer scary films aplenty.

The Melies International Festivals Federation is a network of 25 festivals from 19 countries formed to promote European fantastic film across the globe. (Fantastic film is a term that encompasses not only traditional horror but also fantasy, thriller, sci-fi and similar genres.) The Melies competitions recognize best films with gold and silver medals.

Upcoming film festivals under this umbrella include the Horror

and Fantasy Film Festival in San Sebastian, Spain, Oct. 26-Nov. 1; the Trieste Science + Fiction Festival in Trieste, Italy, Oct. 29-Nov. 3; the Festival de Cinema de Tercor de Molins de Rei in Molins de Rei (outside Barcelona), Spain, Nov. 8-17; and Abercon — The International Horror Festival of Wales in Ceredigion, Wales, Nov. 19-24.

Fun and sun at Canary Islands carnival

One of your better bets for warmth in winter comes in the form of a quick trip to the Canary Islands. This archipelago of seven main islands 60 miles off the coast of Morocco has long been a winter holiday destination for Europeans, and while February's daytime average temperatures in the high sixties aren't exactly sizzling, that's a good sight warmer than it's bound to be on most of the Continent.

Should a trip to the islands be a notion in the back of your mind, consider planning travel to coincide with February's carnival celebrations.

Festivities vary by island, with some of the most notable including fairy tale-themed galas parades

in Las Palmas on Grand Canaria (Feb. 7-March 1), the throwing of talcum powder as part of the Los Indianos celebrations on Santa Cruz de la Palma on La Palma (Feb. 24), or the huge street fest that is the Carnival of Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Feb. 21-24). Maspalomas on Grand Canaria celebrates carnival with elaborate costumes, drag queens and a Broadway musical theme a bit later than others, March 5-15.

Italy's free museum Sundays return

Happy Sundays are here again, thanks to the recent reinvention of a scheme by the Italian government in which all state museums, cultural and archaeological sites are free to enter on the first Sunday of the month. The immensely popular initiative first launched in 2014 was curtailed last autumn but has been reintroduced as of October this year.

Among the some 480 sites visitors can take in for free are such prime properties as the Colosseum in Rome, the Uffizi gallery in Florence, and the Pompeii Archaeological Park outside Naples.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



Number 31 on the menu: Fried noodles with crispy chicken and egg. The chicken was tender and crispy, but the meal would have been enhanced with a better number of sauce options.



Number 26: Fried rice with vegetables and egg.



PHOTOS BY KARIN ZEITVOGEL/Stars and Stripes

Yoshi Nudelbar on Eisenbahnstrasse in Kaiserslautern, Germany, is good for filling a hole in your stomach without creating one in your wallet.

Needs a bit more sauce

Yoshi Nudelbar in downtown Kaiserslautern an almost-perfect place to get your Asian food fix

By KARIN ZEITVOGEL
Stars and Stripes

There are times when all you want is a place to eat where your food will come quickly and fill a hole in your stomach without making one in your wallet. All the better if you don't have to walk several miles to get there because there's nowhere to park right outside.

Other than the parking, Yoshi Nudelbar on Kaiserslautern's busy Eisenbahnstrasse easily fits the bill, and on the rainy Wednesday that I went there for lunch with a friend, we lucked out and got a parking space right across the street.

This is an unassuming place with Formica-topped tables decorated with two bottles of hot sauce, and salt and pepper shakers. The cooks work behind a long counter, chopping fresh veggies, breadling and frying chicken and other meats, and stir-frying at a frenetic pace in large woks. They call themselves an Asia Bistro and a Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese noodle bar, but they also do sushi, so add Japanese to that list.

This is one of those places where you order by number, so I got a 26, which was fried rice with egg and veggies. My lunchmate ordered a 31 — fried noodles with breaded and fried crispy chicken and egg.

We also ordered a No. 23 — tofu with vegetables and curry sauce, served with boiled rice — to take back to the office for a sandwich.

Our food was ready in less time than it took us to find where they kept the forks and knives. The first thing we noticed was the portion size. There was enough rice and vegetables on



my plate to feed an Army regiment. I ended up eating about half of it before asking for a box so I could take the rest home.

The next thing we noticed was that, while tasty, the food was a little bland. We reckoned that's probably because Yoshi's caters to perceived Western tastes — there was a steady stream of Germans and Americans coming and going when we were there. To make up for the blandness, we slathered our meals with one of the hot sauces on the table, wishing that there were more sauces to choose from. Don't be put off by the description on the bottles. I get violent hiccups when something is too spicy, and that didn't happen.

My friend said his chicken was tender and tasty, with just the right crispiness. The noodles it was served with were "good" — his bland description, which was probably spot-on for the bland noodles. My fried rice was, well, OK. It really needed that little extra something that authentic Asian food usually has, which comes from added herbs or spices that we don't usually use in the West. For 4.50 euros for that much food, though, I wasn't going to complain.

Yoshi, which also has a branch in Zweibruecken, offers two desserts — baked bananas with honey and baked pineapple with honey — and a selection of fruit juices, fizzy soft drinks, beer and wine starting at 2 euros for non-



Yoshi Nudelbar's "Super Hot Chili Sauce" isn't really super hot, but it does significantly improve the food's taste.

YOSHI NUDELBAR

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Hours: Open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.

Information: Cash only.

— Karin Zeitvogel

alcoholic beverages. Sake and plum wine are also available.

We were in and out within 20 minutes, complete with the No. 23, which, all the way back to the office, was teasing me with a smell that was much more aromatic than my fried rice. Next time I go — and there will be a next time for that price and that portion size — I'm getting that.

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Turn maple syrup, pancakes into cake

BY BECKY KRISTAL
The Washington Post

Food impersonating other food is a dime a dozen these days: cauliflower rice, vegan burgers, nut cheese. I don't have a problem with any of that. Live and let eat, I say. But once in a while, it's nice to come across a dish that merely reminds you of something else — a whisper of a memory rather than a straight-on simulation.

So, do you like pancakes with maple syrup? Good, because then you're going to love this Sour Cream Maple Cake With Maple Buttercream Frosting.

The cake comes together in minutes in a single bowl, which you can clean out and use to make an equally speedy frosting. The cake is lofty, tender and golden. Despite the inclusion of maple syrup, granulated and brown sugars, it does not come across as cloying, or even that sweet at all. The inclusion of sour cream certainly helps. The frosting brings a very nice touch (it's fairly rich, which is why we have suggested as many as 16 servings), but know that the cake on its own would



TOM McCORRILE/For The Washington Post
Sour Cream Maple Cake With Maple Buttercream Frosting is easy and delicious.

make a great addition to a brunch spread.

The only reason I don't make this cake on a weekly basis is that it does indeed call for more than a cup of maple syrup total. We all know the stuff is not cheap. The flavor, though, is absolutely worth it — at least once in a while — and if you can buy your syrup in bulk or on a visit to a maple syrup-producing region, all the better. You want to look for dark-grade maple syrup, such as Grade A dark color/robust flavor or Grade A very dark/strong flavor.

Now pull on a flannel, get your fireplace crackling and enjoy this breakfast as cake. Or is it cake as breakfast? Either way, it's a winner.

SOUR CREAM MAPLE CAKE WITH MAPLE BUTTERCREAM FROSTING

12 to 16 servings (makes one 9-inch cake)

Ingredients

For the cake:
Unsalted butter, softened, for greasing the pan
2 ½ cups (344 grams) flour, plus more for dusting the pan
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup (240 ml) dark-grade pure maple syrup
½ cup (120 ml) canola oil
½ cup (120 milliliters) whole milk, at room temperature

2 large eggs, at room temperature and lightly beaten
¼ cup (50 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar

¼ cup (60 grams) sour cream, at room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
For the frosting:
8 tablespoons (1 stick/113 grams) unsalted butter, softened

2 cups (200 grams) confectioners' sugar
3 tablespoons sour cream, at room temperature
2 tablespoons dark-grade pure maple syrup, plus more for drizzling
½ teaspoon kosher salt

Directions
Make the cake: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees with the rack in the middle. Butter and flour a 9-inch square baking pan. Line the pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over the sides of the pan (the overhang will give you

handles to lift out the cake after it's baked).

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add the maple syrup, oil, milk, eggs, brown sugar, granulated sugar and vanilla, and stir with a rubber spatula just until combined and no streaks of flour remain. (Some lumps in the batter are okay.) Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Tap the pan on the counter eight times to release air bubbles.

Bake 30 to 35 minutes, until deep golden and a cake tester or toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, covering with foil after 20 minutes to prevent excessive browning. (It may dip in the middle, but don't worry.) Let cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Using the parchment overhang as handles, remove the cake from the pan and let cool completely on a wire rack.

Make the frosting: In the same (cleaned-out) bowl you used to make the cake, beat the butter with a hand-held mixer on medium speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes. (You can do this in a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, if you prefer.) Gradually add the confectioners' sugar, beating until combined. Add the sour cream, maple syrup and salt, and beat at medium-high speed until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Do not overbeat.

Spread the frosting onto the cooled cake. Drizzle with additional maple syrup and serve.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



I BIKE TUSCANY/TNS

An I Bike Tuscany tour takes the back roads through beautiful Italian countryside. Bicycling is extremely popular in Italy among locals and tourists.

Tuscany on two wheels

A bike ride to Siena proves to be the ideal day trip from Florence, Italy

BY KERRI WESTENBERG
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

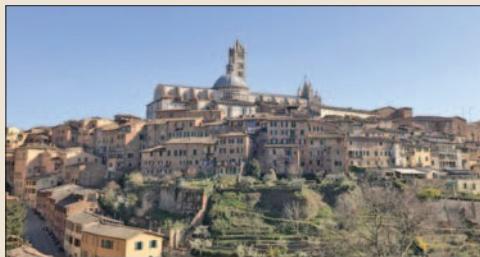
An Italian puffed his way up the narrow road — literally. His hands clutched his handlebars, leveraging them for power as he cycled uphill. That left only one place for his cigarette: between his lips.

He smiled in greeting as we passed. Headed in the opposite direction, I had just crested the hill and my speed was picking up. On this sunny Saturday in spring, I had already coasted past fields of gnarled olive trees, seen a pheasant scamper into the grasses, breathed in Cypress-tinged air — and encountered scads of Italians in skin-hugging bike shorts zipping across Tuscany (the vast majority without tobacco).

"Italians are crazy for bikes," guide Marco Vignoli told me before I set off. An Italian could be broke and still wouldn't hesitate to drop \$5,000 on a road bike, he said with a shrug.

Percived upright on a comfortable hybrid bike, I began to understand why cycling is central to the Italian lifestyle: It's the best way to experience the country-side.

When planning a five-day stay in Florence, my husband and I had two



The biking trip culminated in Siena, Italy, a hilltop town in central Tuscany.

side-trips in mind. We wanted to bike in the Tuscan hills and we wanted to take a day trip to Siena, a medieval confection of a town centered by the dramatic oval-shaped Piazza del Campo.

My research uncovered a way to do both at once.

"How about if we biked from Florence to Siena?" I asked, with my laptop propped open.

At the time, it was the heart of

had caught my eye, one that sounded even better — by 7 miles. Dubbed "Florence to Siena Soft," it begins with a van ride to a hilltop village, eliminates all but one long climb and covers a breezy 13 miles. Perfetto.

The morning of our ride, we fortified ourselves with a big hotel breakfast and then headed to the meeting point. The company couldn't pick us up because our hotel was in a pedestrian-only zone. We knew we were at the right place when we saw a van with bikes on its racks and a lean Italian looking for us.

In March, the biking season was young, so we had a double treat: Our small-group tour became, de facto, a private tour since no one else had signed up. And our tour guide turned out to be the owner of the company, Vignoli.

A former cycling racer and long-time biking guide, Vignoli turned out to be a charmer, and not just in that iconic Italian-gentleman kind of way. He splits his time between Florence, where he grew up and where his mother still lives, and the Los Angeles area, just a few miles from where my husband and I used to live. We spent the ride to the starting point discussing his favorite biking routes from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

FROM PAGE 30

Los Angeles' Brentwood section to the Pacific Ocean. He offered restaurant suggestions in both Siena and Florence. Tony Bennett crooned on his car speakers.

After a 45-minute drive, Vignoli dropped us at a coffee shop in Castellina in Chianti, a golden-hued stone village that seems to have sprouted from the hilltop eons ago. We walked down its winding main drag to a farmers market and encountered a rarity, at least in our tourist experience: Commerce intended for Italians, conducted by vendors who spoke no English.

We were tempted by cheeses, sausages hanging overhead and heaps of vegetables. I used my rudimentary Italian to buy a bag of mixed dried fruit whose names I mostly did not recognize and bottled herbs from a farmer shading himself with a yellow umbrella.

After shopping, we rejoined Vignoli at the coffee shop and headed to a parking lot, which was large and open enough for us to try out the bikes before starting our journey. Vignoli told us that he'd be at every stop and turn along the way, and then drove ahead.

Soon, he was flagging us down at a cluster of stone buildings and led us into a sleek bar for a wine tasting in Monterutoli, which bottles Chianti Classico and other wines. The pours were delicious, even if it was just 10:30 in the morning. We sipped lightly, knowing we had miles to go.

Our next stop was a scenic overlook, where Vignoli checked on our water supply and made sure we were fine. He later waved us on at a corner and touched base before our only significant hill. "No racing; the hill is long," he warned.

I took the gears as low as they would go, and worked my way to the top, which culminated in another hilltop hamlet, where laundry hung out to dry. There, I rejoined my husband, who'd already finished the ascent, and Vignoli, who gave me an enthusiastic high-five. From there, he assured us we didn't have far to go.

Just when I was ready to quit, I saw Vignoli up ahead, waving us down. My legs felt just a little bit like jello when I rolled my bike up to Vignoli — but they had enough power left for a walk through Siena.

We rode the van to the outskirts of town, made a plan to meet Vignoli at the same spot in three hours, and tracked down lunch in the city; we'd set off from Florence at 9 a.m. and made it to Siena by 1 p.m.

We explored the hilly city, marveling at its duomo, dining on heaps of pasta, and enjoying a scoop of guilt-free gelato in Piazza del Campo, along with loads of other tourists.

After a day of cycling in the countryside, where we encountered biking Italians but few others, Siena felt beautiful but crowded.

We were content to de-compress during the van ride back to Florence, nibbling mysterious pieces of dried fruit and watching the landscape pass by at a van's pace. We'd already seen Tuscany at the best pace, by bike.

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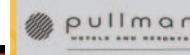


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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific



PHOTOS BY NATALIE COMPTON/Washington Post

Typical wood sliding doors seen in room with a garden view at Kakurinbo, a Buddhist temple in Japan's Yamagata prefecture.

Temple transformation

When in Japan, consider taking time out from travels to soak up a traditional Japanese environment by sleeping over at a shukubo, or Buddhist temple

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post

A typical visit to Japan for many tourists consists of a few days in Tokyo, a train over to Kyoto, maybe Osaka. You stay in a hotel full of amenities, or, if you're on a budget, you might be staying in a capsule hotel or hostel.

That trip would be incredible. You'd learn about the country's most prominent cities, eat and drink amazing things, and inevitably start planning your next trip back in your head on the way home.

But for an off-the-beaten-path travel experience in Japan, consider the shukubo.

A shukubo is a Buddhist temple in Japan that hosts travelers overnight. Traditionally, temples in Japan have welcomed travelers visiting for religious reasons. Pilgrims have long retreated to temple stays for days or more, spending time praying, copying religious scripture, hiking and meditating.

Today, the temple stay is appealing to a new demographic of travelers. Regardless of religious or cultural background, the experience can be transformative.

It begins when you take your shoes off at the entrance. Your focus shifts from the chaos of your own life to the beauty and calm of the temple. A sense of peace falls over you and lingers throughout your stay.

When you stay in a hotel or Airbnb, the attraction is the city around you. At a temple, the accommodation is the attraction. There's joy in wandering the halls, walking around the property and taking part in routines normally reserved for monks and priests, like copying sutras (Buddhist scripture) as a mindfulness activity and eating shojin ryori vegetarian cuisine.

Then there's the serenity of a traditional Japanese environment. The sound of sliding back the wooden door to your tatami mat room becomes ASMR. Soaking in the large, often communal baths makes luxury out of something normally routine.



The food, here prepared by Junko Higuchi at Kakurinbo, is one of the most memorable aspects to a shukubo stay.

The internet has helped the shukubo renaissance. Last year, a website was launched for the Terahaku (or temple stay) project, an effort to make this form of lodging more accessible by putting access to it online. The project started with 100 options, like the 1,300-year-old Mii-dera shukubo in Shiga prefecture, but the goal is to list 1,000 over the course of three years.

There are ways to keep a temple stay outside of the Terahaku project, too. The Koyasan Shukubo Association built a website to promote its temple stays in the Koya region of Wakayama Prefecture. Some shukubo have created English-language websites and putting their accommodations on Booking.com, Airbnb and Japanican.com.

Located in Minobusan — a mountain village in Yamanashi prefecture — Kakurinbo has been around for 550 years, making it one of the oldest in the region. If you're coming from Tokyo, there's a bus that takes you right up to the village. From the last Minobusan bus stop, it's a 10-minute walk to this shukubo. You can also take the train from Tokyo to Minobu Station and get a taxi to take you into the mountains and directly to the temple.

Kakurinbo is run by husband-and-wife-owners Zeryo (the temple's priest) and Junko Higuchi. Junko is trying to revitalize Minobusan. The town's population has dwindled in the past few decades, and despite being one of Japan's most important religious areas, Minobusan gets left out of most guidebooks. Junko hopes tourism will help breathe new life into the village.

There's a lot going on in Minobusan for travelers. Up the road from Kakurinbo is the most important pilgrimage site for devotees of Nichiren Buddhism. Visitors can walk the 287 stone "steps to enlightenment," ending up at the stunning structures that make up this temple, more than 700 years old. There are two prayer ceremonies open to visitors daily. From the temple, you can take a ropeway up the sacred Mount Minobu to Okuno-in Station, a viewing point where you can see Mount Fuji, depending on the time of year.

Since Minobusan is in the prefecture known for its wine and fruit, the rest of your time at Kakurinbo is best spent eating and drinking. Junko travels to Kyoto each month to learn cooking techniques from a master chef, taking the skills back to the Kakurinbo kitchen, where she plans ornate meals of vegetarian fine-dining.

Leaving behind the interlude of stillness to ricochet back into the real world can be difficult. You'll regret not staying at the temple longer and wonder why this kind of experience isn't more popular among travelers. But if you're lucky, that sense of calm you acquired can stay with you on your way out.



Above: "Steps to Enlightenment" at the Minobusan Kuonji Temple.
Below: Kakurinbo's bathing house.



WEEKEND: TRAVEL, FOOD & DINING

Pacific

Looking for an exotic bite?

Ninja Cafe & Bar in Tokyo serves various foods shaped like throwing stars — and sometimes fare that's truly deadly

By THERON GODBOLD
Stars and Stripes

In the shadow of Tokyo Skytree, the tallest tower in Japan, is a small restaurant, Ninja Cafe & Bar.

On a typical day, the attraction at this 20-seat restaurant in Asakusa is the ninja-costumed wait staff. The ninja theme flows over you like a black wave, your connection to the present the soft hum of pop music like "Macarena" on the sound system.

Black-clad attendants show you to your seat. The food arrives in the shape of shuriken, also known as throwing stars. Ninja Curry and rice, Okonomiyaki, Ninja Chicken and Ninja sausage are all shaped as shuriken.

But for one week in September, the 20-seat Ninja Cafe served 1,000 bowls of piranha ramen. You read that correctly — ramen made with the flesh of the notorious, all-consuming, carnivorous South American freshwater fish. I was lucky among the relative few to feast on this rare dish.

At just over the yen equivalent of \$50, a bowl of piranha ramen was priced on the steep side, but a good deal in my opinion for fish from the Amazon River, halfway around the world. For just under \$30, you could get the ramen minus the fish but made with piranha broth.

The soft flavor of this ramen is one of the best I have had in the past year in Japan. The noodles were served al dente and had a floral note.

There was no gamey or fishy flavor from the broth; perhaps the garnish of



lemon and ginger masked it.

The fish — pan fried whole — is a wonderfully flavored white fish with very little of the muddy flavor I expected.

There is a drawback, though. When I ordered the piranha topping, the server handed me a Styrofoam bowl and said: "For the bones."

And there were bones. I think more than half my fish was bone, and not all were large. I spent about 10 minutes throughout the meal fishing tiny slivers of piranha bone out of the delicate white meat. Of about two pounds of fish, a third was likely bone.

Another problem I ran into was the simple task of eating a whole, bony fish using chopsticks. The sardonic grin of my prey looked back at me as I chased it around the bowl trying to get at its delicate meat. A plate, knife and fork would have made this task slightly easier.

Because of the difficulty of importing the fish from Brazil, the piranha was a one-off meal. However, the Ninja Cafe & Bar Asakusa has more tricks up its sleeve. Future menu items include kangaroo, crocodile, rabbit and camel.

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PHOTOS BY THERON GODBOLD/*Stars and Stripes*

Ninja Cafe & Bar is a small, 20-seat eatery in the shadow of Tokyo Skytree.



Those lucky enough to get one of the 1,000 bowls of piranha ramen at Ninja Cafe & Bar in September had a rare, tasty but bony culinary treat.



For one week in September, this face greeted purchasers of piranha ramen at Tokyo's 20-seat Ninja Cafe & Bar.

NINJA CAFE & BAR ASAKUSA

Location: 3-27-14 Nishi-Asakusa, Taito-ku, Tokyo 111-0035

Hours: Open daily, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

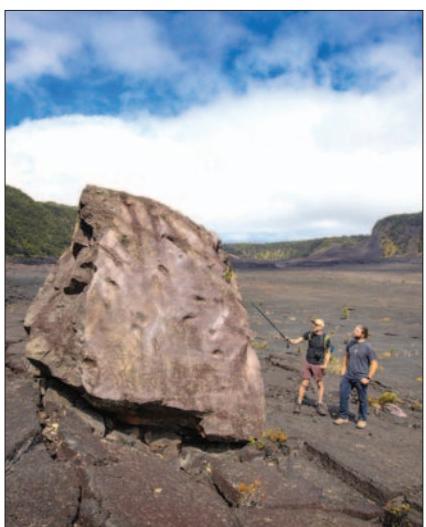
Prices: Menu items average 1,500 yen, or about \$14. The full ninja experience (reservations required) costs about \$93 per person.

Dress: Casual

Directions: A 10-minute walk from Tawaramachi Station on the Ginza Line. GPS: N 39 34.267, E 24 45.433.

Information: 03-6231-7387; Online: ninja-cafe.com

— Theron Godbold



A massive boulder is one of the sights on the newly reopened Kilauea Iki Trail in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park trail reopens, now features large boulders

Los Angeles Times

The popular Kilauea Iki Trail in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park recently fully reopened, a year and a half after Kilauea erupted and more than 60,000 quakes rattled the volcano's summit. The shaking last year damaged much of the park, including the popular four-mile loop from the rim of a crater to its floor. Now visitors will see something new along the way: large boulders that tumbled down during the seismic shaking, a park release says.

The trail starts out in lush forest and gives way to the sparse floor of the crater, which in 1959 was a "seething lava lake, with lava fountains up to 1,900 feet high," according to the park's website. Hikers now walk on hardened lava where decades later there's still a hot rock that steams on the surface.

Part of the trail reopened in April; the full trail reopened Sept. 21 after final repairs were completed. Work crews from the nonprofit Friends of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and other national park workers helped make repairs.

It's all part of the park's slow recovery from the eruption that forced the park to close for an unprecedented 134 days in 2018.

Some of the park's features were forever changed. The bubbling lava lake within Halemaumau Crater near the summit disappeared after lava was sucked underground, and the crater doubled in size. The park's Jaggar Museum, which contained geologic and cultural artifacts, sits precariously close to the newly formed rim.



National Park Service photos

The newly repaired Kilauea Iki Trail in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park fully reopened Sept. 21.

The building was so severely damaged it may never reopen. Museum exhibits may be relocated to Pahoa, a town near the park.

Outside the park, more than 700 homes in a neighborhood called the Puna District were destroyed by the wall of lava from the volcano.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

iStock

Fear of flying?



For many Americans, statistical safety not enough to quell 'aviophobia'

BY SARAH VANDER SCHAFF
The Washington Post

Tami Augen Rhodes needed to fly to Washington. An invitation to a black-tie event at the Supreme Court was an opportunity for the 49-year-old lawyer in Tampa, Fla., did not want to miss. But Rhodes had not flown since she was 35, when an escalating dislike of flying grew into a firm phobia.

Desperate to get to Washington without resorting to a long train ride, Rhodes called into a weekly group-telephone chat run by Tom Bunn, a former Air Force and commercial airline pilot and licensed clinical social worker who runs a program for fearful fliers.

Bunn asked her what she was afraid of.

"I started crying," Rhodes recalled. She told the group what worried her. "I am afraid of dying."

Fear of flying, or aviophobia, is an anxiety disorder. About 40% of the general population reports some fear of flying, and 2.5% have what is classified as a clinical phobia, one in which a person avoids flying or does so with significant distress.

As with other situational phobias, the fear is disproportionate to the danger posed. Commercial air travel in the United States is extremely safe. A person who took a 500-mile flight every day for a year would have a fatality risk of 1 in 85,000, according to an analysis by Ian Savage, associate chair of the Economics Department at Northwestern University. In contrast, highway travel accounts for 94.4% of national transportation fatalities.

But for many, statistics are not enough to quell phobias.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America suggests eight steps to help identify triggers and defuse them. Martin Seif, a clinical psychologist who wrote the steps, identifies the variety of conditions that may comprise the phobia — panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and panic disorder, among them.

Fear of flying, or aviophobia, is an anxiety disorder. About 40% of the general population reports some fear of flying, and 2.5% have what is classified as a clinical phobia, one in which a person avoids flying or does so with significant distress.

For some, breathing exercises, anti-anxiety medication and cognitive behavioral therapy work. But the strategies do not work for everyone.

Bunn has worked with fearful fliers since 1980 after becoming curious about the psychological and physical components that produced anxiety and panic in situations that as a pilot knew to be safe. He developed a set of mental exercises for fearful fliers. One, called the "strengthening exercise," links specific phases of air travel with a joyful personal memory, a visualization technique meant to trigger a sense of calm.

Rhodes had two months to prepare. She delved deeply into written exercises, videos and phone sessions. The day of her flight, she felt anxiety. But she was organized, equipped with magazines, memorized mental exercises and had an understanding of the expected noises and sensations of flight.

It worked.

"The panic never came," she said, describing her flight. Since then, she has flown several more times, including a trip to Seattle to surprise her best friend.

Fear of flying, according to one overview, is far less studied than other conditions that can be detrimental to relationships and careers such as social anxiety, obsessive compulsive and post-traumatic stress disorders. Little is known about what keeps people afraid even after their return to successful flights. And there are few experts in the field who are trained as both pilots and clinical social workers.

Untreated, the phobia takes a toll. Rhodes did not go to her grandmother's funeral or her best friend's wedding.

Bunn trained as a fighter pilot, a vocation he chose because growing up in a small town in North Carolina after World War II, "the ones who got all the attention were ex-pilots," he said. He finished the top of his class in flight school and got assigned to the F-100 Super Sabre, a supersonic fighter.

While based in Germany in the early 1960s, sitting around on "nuclear alert," he delved into books on psychology, an interest spurred by his mother's mental illness. Later, as a commercial pilot for Pan Am, he helped a fellow pilot with a graduation class for fearful fliers run by the airline.

"People were sitting on the plane doing breathing exercises, doing exactly what we told them, and they still had panic," he said. It was awful to be so helpless, he thought.

By 1982, Bunn started his own course, and eventually earned a master's degree in social work at Fordham University. He did shifts at a Veterans Affairs hospital, and in 1996 retired from flying to work full time as a licensed clinical social worker in Bridgeport, Conn.

His program for fearful fliers, SOAR, continued to grow until it became his sole focus.

"[People] were in control," he said. "They didn't have to show up in an airport and fly in two days."

At age 83, Bunn is busy. He responds to 30 to 40 emails a day from anxious fliers and conducts up to eight private phone sessions. His weekly email goes to more than 17,000 subscribers. Last April, he released a book, "Panic Free: The 10-Day Program to End Panic, Anxiety, and Claustrophobia," which uses the system developed for fearful fliers.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

"The Lion King": Most of what director Jon Favreau learned making "The Jungle Book" was used to make the live-action version of "The Lion King" based on the Oscar-winning 1994 Disney animated film. This "Lion King" features the same stunning visual effects, and the slight human touches given to the animals are enough to help express emotion, but not to the point of making the creatures seem mutated.

Once again, the young lion Simba (voiced both by JD McCrary and Donald Glover), finds himself in the "Hamlet"-inspired story of royal treachery as his uncle Scar (Chiwetel Ejiofor) will go to deadly extremes to take over as the king of the pride. When tragedy strikes, Simba must find a way to live up to the teachings of his wise father, Mufasa (James Earl Jones).

The question with past live-action interpretations of animated works continues: Do we really need another version? The animated version was as close to perfection as possible with story, music, visuals and voice casting. The live-action version has equally strong elements, but even if they reach the high standards of the original offering, that doesn't qualify as a reason to make the same film again.



Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

Disney's remake of "The Lion King" looks as real as a nature documentary.

"Veronica Mars: The Complete First Season": You can't keep a great mystery-solver quiet for long. Fans remained so loyal after three seasons of "Veronica Mars" that a film was made featuring the sleuth and her friends. And the show got a third life when Hulu ordered eight episodes for what is being called the first season. It's really Season 4, but that's only a number.

The show continues to work because of the snappy writing and the never-aging Kristen Bell as Mars. She plays the role with a feisty attitude, especially in scenes with her father (Emilio Colantonio). They get to trade jabs while trying to figure out who behind a series of bombings in their town.

No matter the season, "Veronica Mars" remains one of the best detective shows to air on TV.

Also available on DVD:

"Satanic Panic": Pizza delivery driver becomes the target of a group of Satanists looking for someone to sacrifice. Rebecca Romijn stars.

"Bakugan: Origin of Species": Dan Kouvo and his best friends defend the mysterious Bakugan race.

"NOS4A2: Season 1": Young woman with the special power to find things faces off with a supernatural villain who feeds off the souls of children. Zachary Quinto stars.

"Strange but True": Search is conducted to find the truth behind a deadly crash and a surprise pregnancy. Amy Ryan stars.

"The Daniel Craig Collection": Set includes "Casino Royale," "Quantum of Solace," "Skyfall" and "Spectre."

"An Israeli Love Story": Film is based on the true story of the love affair between a theater director and the son of Israel's second president.

Rick Bentley/Tribune News Service



On target

Actor Stephen Amell proud of his work on TV's 'Arrow'

BY RICK BENTLEY
Tribune News Service

Stephen Amell was filming an episode earlier this year for the final season of The CW's "Arrow" when he took off the leg quiver he wears during a break. He didn't put the costume piece back on and filmed the rest of the night without it. The next day Amell pushed for the scene to be reshoot because of the continuity problem.

"That (expletive) matters to me. It's a (expletive) travesty and inexcusable," Amell says.

His reaction came when it would have been easy for the Canadian actor to have just moved on because the show is coming to an end. That's not the way Amell works. He has been a passionate advocate of the TV series since it went on the air in 2012, playing both the playboy-turned-good-guy Oliver Queen and the hooded vigilante Arrow with the same deep convictions.

Amell stresses that if he didn't care so much about the show, things like continuity mistakes wouldn't bother him.

Amell's commitment will take him through 185 episodes playing the character, with the final season starting Sunday on AFN-Spectrum. He says in the year "Arrow" debuted there were 180 scripts for network TV shows ordered and 60 filmed to be potential series. Only "Arrow" and "Chicago Fire" are still on the air from that season of new programming on the five networks.

That's why he calls being around for so many seasons as being part of "rarefied air."

The story starts with a violent shipwreck that left billionaire playboy Oliver Queen missing and presumed dead for five years before being discovered alive on a remote island in the North China Sea. When Queen gets home to Star City, he's determined to right the wrongs of his family. Help in doing that came from former soldier John Diggle (David Ramsey), computer science expert Felicity Smoak (Emily Bett Rickards), inventor Curtis Holt (Echo Kellum), street-savvy Rene Ramirez (Rick Gonzalez) and meta-human Dinah Drake (Juliana Harkavy).

Amell has also worked on the feature film "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows" and the televisi-

on movie "Vixen: The Movie." Other credits include "New Girl," "Private Practice," "Hung" and "CSI: Miami." There have also been crossover episodes where he appeared on "The Flash" and "Supergirl." There will be another major crossover event this year starting Dec. 8, "Crisis on Infinite Earths," where Amell will play two different characters.

Executive producer Beth Schwartz explains the 10 episodes that make up the final season of "Arrow" will be leading up to "Crisis," and the crossover has changed the normal structure of how the show has been filmed. Previously the show would go along with its normal storyline and then the crossover would be inserted. It's all about the crossover this year.

"This year, because we're leading up to something spectacular, we're allowed to do huge event episodes, and we're allowed to bring characters back that we haven't seen in a while. And each episode is humongous. It's not like anything we've done on a show before," Schwartz says.

The intensity of the final season has been a distraction for the cast and crew from dealing with the final days of filming. Amell describes how this year every



Stephen Amell plays Oliver Queen/Green Arrow on "Arrow." The eighth and final season premieres Sunday on AFN-Spectrum.

The CW photos

episode has felt like they were trying to put a button on a certain part of the program.

"And every day, knowing that there's an end in sight, knowing how many of our crew despite the fact that they got offers for shows that are going to be filming 22 episodes this year, our entire crew came back for 10 episodes. Every day that I walk on set, I just think about how lucky I am to have had this opportunity," Amell says.

The plan for Amell is to take a few days off after "Arrow" is done and then get back to work in early 2020. He feels ready to take on any new acting challenge because of what he has learned from the show.

"I know it sounds weird to say this, but what I did on 'Arrow,' I think I have become a pretty good actor. I am ready to get back in the room and fight for something that I want. Nothing would make me happier than if someone else would be Arrow and nailed it. But I am ready to say goodbye to Oliver Queen," Amell says.

He does have one tiny regret.

"I'm kind of pissed we didn't get to 200 episodes, but what are you going to do?"

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Chris Knight

Almost Daylight (Thirty Tigers)

In his first release in more than seven years, Kentucky-born country rocker Chris Knight has snarled out an album that's gruff, uncompromising and perfect for the times.

"Almost Daylight" rails against hardship, misfortune and phoniness; set against a musical backdrop that's built around Knight's charmingly marble-mouthed singing style and the jagged-edged electric guitar swagger of Dan Baird and Chris Clark.

Long known for his visual, earthy songwriting, Knight has matured from his days as a rebel in the tradition of John Prine and Steve Earle. But his music remains grounded in his deep Kentucky roots, so much so that he can plausibly rhyme "rich" with "catch," as he does on "Send It Down."

Country great Lee Ann Womack lends background vocals to that one, and Prince himself chimes in on the raucous closer, "Mexican Home" — both signs of the respect Knight commands among Nashville song-writing royalty.

That's partly because Knight never seems inauthentic the way some more commercially successful country singers do. He just doesn't seem capable of being anyone but himself.

In his work, hope always hangs up against hard reality. Whether he's declaring his love for a woman with a "heartbreak lie" in "Crooked Mile" or complaining about media lies in "The Damn Truth," he's looking for salvation in all of it — and the search itself is often painful.

"Sometimes hope sinks like a stone," he sings on "Go On." "Keep your head up, keep your head up, keep your head up and go on."

It's not exactly happy music. But it's the sort of striving that makes Knight, once again, an important voice for our times.

— Scott Stroud
Associated Press

Michael Sweet

Ten (Rak Patk)

It's called "Ten," but this goes to 11.

This album is among the best work Michael Sweet has ever done, and that's saying quite a bit given his nine previous solo albums and extensive discography with the trailblazing Christian heavy metal band Stryper.

It almost seems like the high-octave vocalist and guitar maestro is keeping '80s heavy metal alive all on his own, given his frenetic output and the consistent quality of each release.

His 10th solo album begins with a heavy dose of transplanted Stryper DNA on "Better Part of Me," which is built around the intro riff from 1986's "More Than A Man."

It's remarkable how well Sweet's voice has held up over nearly four decades, with scant rest between discs and tours.

A time-honored tradition of '80s metal is the power ballad, and no one does them better than Sweet. This time it's "Let It Be Love," a worthy successor to the MTV smash "Honesty" and 1990's "Lady."

Sweet also brings in a truckload of metal friends, including cameos from members of Whitesnake, L.A. Guns, Foreigner and Arch Enemy. "Son of Man," a duet with Todd La Torre of Queensryche, is everything a heavy metal song should be: fast-paced, drum-heavy and with unfathomably shredding guitar by Andy James. It sounds like what might be expected if Sweet sang with Motorhead while Yngwie Malmsteen played guitar.

It all adds up: "Ten" is easily one of the best hard rock albums of 2019.

— Wayne Parry
Associated Press



Elbow

Giants of All Sizes
(Polydor/Verve Music Group)

With all the talk about bleakness and the experiences of anger and loss affecting "Giants of All Sizes," you'd imagine Elbow's eighth studio album arriving with an "Abandon" hope, all ye who enter here" warning sticker.

But while there's plenty of heaviness and weariness, the Manchester band's empathy and flair for the hymn-like will help alleviate the oppression.

Richly textured arrangements — the band returned to playing live in the studio — and brilliant compositions, along with the resourceful use of singer/lyricist Guy Garvey's layered vocals, not to mention his endearing pronunciation and a redeeming finale, also lift some of the emotional load off the listener.

The ingredients of extended opener "Dexter & Sinner" divide roughly into 60% ominous — mechanical grooves and neither faith, hope nor charity — and 40% dexterous, with a prog-rock coda, the album's best guitar riffs and outstanding vocals from Jesca Hoop.

The target of "Seven Veils" played the game too long, has been found out and definitely dismissed, while "Empires," which "crumble all the time," is very Brexit, with buzzing keyboards and a beautiful second section that's typically wordy, breathless and distressed and has an especially inspired bass line.

"White Noise White Heat" is a thumping reflection of pain and rage triggered by the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in London, which killed 72 people, and by the apparent futility of the artist and his art in the face of such tragedy.

Still, the album ends with a trio of tunes that, in recalling what's important (for Garvey it's family, friends, the band and a new life), lay the foundations for better times ahead.

The exquisite "My Trouble" is a term of endearment elevated by a wondrous string section, "On Deronda Road" is an enduring memory, and "Weightless" touchingly traces the passing of time and generations from grandfather to father to son.

"Giants of All Sizes" is one of Elbow's best, a record of its time that dares envision a brighter future.

— Pablo Gorondi
Associated Press



North Mississippi Allstars

Up and Rolling (New West)

The blues is alive and kicking, and rock ain't dead either. Thank the North Mississippi Allstars for that reminder.

Luther and Cody Dickinson's latest album is a communal jam band amalgam that embraces a couple of creaky old musical genres and still sounds like 2019 because everyone involved seems to be having so much fun, and there's no expiration date on that.

"Up and Rolling" ranges from roadhouse blues ("Out on the Road") and festival rock ("Lonesome In My Home") to disco funk ("Bump That Music") and a socially conscious fist pumper ("Living Free"). The band connects Muddy Waters with Prince on the saucious grinder "Peaches," where a stepladder never sounded so sexy, and seeks forgiveness with a gospel swing on "Take My Hand, Precious Lord." More heavenly yet is the Mavis Staples-led tent revival stomper "What You Gonna Do?"

The Dickinson brothers spotlight a handful of guests, and even Jason Isbell has the blues. He and Duane Betts help turn Little Walter's "Mean Old World" into a 12-bar boogie with an Allmanesque coda straight from Fillmore East.

Electric guitars abound, and Cody is a marvel on drums, which is a big reason the music finds grooves sure to make hips shake and toes tap. It's all as loose as a collar on a 90-degree day, and a good way to work up a sweat.

— Steven Wine
Associated Press



Big Thief

Two Hands (4AD)

How does the internal manifest itself in the physical? Is it rocking your body to ward off fear? Is it cutting off hair in a redirection of pain?

There's a pleading in the voice of Big Thief's Adrienne Lenker as she searches for the connection between body and soul. On the new album "Two Hands," it is this connection that is ultimately explored.

The Brooklyn-based indie folk-rock band is a well of inspiration. In the past three years, Big Thief has released four albums. "Two Hands" falls on the heels of "U.F.O.F.," a critically acclaimed album released only five months ago.

Though "Two Hands" follows close behind their last, it is distinct. These tracks are not simply leftovers from their last album but address entirely different themes and harness an entirely unique energy.

While "U.F.O.F." is more cryptic, concerning itself with the metaphysical, "Two Hands" is grounded in humanity's current existence.

In "Forgotten Eyes," Lenker sings of homelessness and addiction, relating humanity to a collective body. "It is me who is more hollow as I'm quickly passing by" / And the poison is killing them, but then so am I / As I turn away," she sings emotionally, sometimes as her voice cracks.

"Shoulders" is desperate and impassioned as Lenker implores a body in the chorus, "Please wake up," yet recognizes her own capacity for destruction: "And the blood of the man Who's killing off mother with his hands Is in me, it's in me, in my veins."

The elements that have drawn in audiences are still there, from the band's raw, stripped-down style to the ability of Lenker to transform her vocals, going from gravelly to ethereal all the while maintaining a sense of vulnerability.

Releasing two albums in a year might seem excessive, but thankfully Lenker and her bandmates won't waste your time. "Two Hands" is too good and proves that Big Thief still have much to say.

— Ragan Clark
Associated Press

Fantasia

Sketchbook (Rock Soul/BMG)

If you haven't heard Fantasia's latest singles, there's an easy summary: one's spiritual, another's about sex, and both are worth a listen.

The singer draws from very different worlds on her latest album, "Sketchbook" — crediting a higher power for her heavenly vocals on the upbeat "Holy Ghost," then confessing the pleasure and peril of a good romp in the hay on the seductive T-Pain-assisted "PTSD" (short for "Post-Traumatic Sex Disorder").

Neither area is foreign territory to Fantasia, whose powerhouse vocals earned her the title of "American Idol" back in 2004. Since then, the R&B world has seen tons of shift, with newcomers who seem more focused on creating a "vibe" and less concerned with (or capable of) the dramatic belting out that Fantasia's known for.

And while Fantasia has injected some youthfulness into her production, the Grammy winner is staying true to her artistry on "Sketchbook," her first independent release. She delivers the fullness of her voice on the sexy, guitar-laced "Believer" and the easygoing "Enough," pours her honeyed vocals over the island-influenced beat of "Take Off," and experiments with a rock feel on "Warning."

Fantasia's gospel roots remain strong, of course, and that will be delighted by "Looking for You," which features the singer's mom, Diana. "Sketchbook" was originally supposed to include a collaboration with fellow R&B stars Brandy and Jazmine Sullivan, though Fantasia explained that it didn't happen because of "politics." The song would have been welcomed, but thankfully Fantasia makes "Sketchbook" a work of art, all her own.



— Melanie J. Sims
Associated Press

WEEKEND: MUSIC



SMOOTH OPERATOR

Ari Lennox turned 2016 meeting with J. Cole into critically acclaimed debut album, 'Shea Butter Baby'

Ari Lennox poses for a portrait in New York to promote "Shea Butter Baby," her full-length debut released in May. Within months of a 2016 meeting with rapper J. Cole, Lennox became the first lady of Cole's label, Dreamville Records.

BY MESFIN FEKADU
Associated Press

Ari Lennox was drunk on a plane as she headed to meet J. Cole for the first time in 2016 to work on music the rapper had been putting together for Rihanna.

"I still had baby vodkas left from the plane," Lennox recalls. "Definitely just throwing them back. It was scary."

Cole had been listening to

Lennox's music on SoundCloud for some time — slowly becoming a fan of her soulful

sound — and Ibrahim "Ib" Hamad, the rap star's long-time manager and president of his label, Dreamville Records — thought it would be a good idea to bring Lennox along for the Rih Rih sessions.

"Even though (Cole) was very sweet and comforting and it was a genuine vibe, it was still scary. I was in a whole other world, basically by myself," Lennox said. But the Washington, D.C., native was determined to get signed. They began working on a song called "Facetime."

"There's an energy on 'Facetime' like, I want to show him I can write something really fast and it's going to be great. It's going to be so good," Lennox said.

Months later, Lennox became the first lady of Dreamville, also home to J.I.D., Bas, Cozz, EarthGang, Lute and Omen, who originally put Cole and Ib onto Lennox's music.

"Just seeing her in that room, it wasn't like she was star-struck or anything, she was just being herself, being kind of shy; she knew she had to get to work in a sense," Ib recalled. "That was something that, for me,

was enough to see that she did get along with the team. (I thought), 'We should make a run at trying to sign her' because I got to see with my own eyes her going at work and how simple it was for her to come up with the melodies and just write on the spot."

Three years later, "Facetime" — produced by Cole — is one of the 12 songs that make up "Shea Butter Baby," Lennox's critically acclaimed full-length debut, which was released in May. She's been hard at work on the buttery, smooth album since 2016, crafting songs about love, men, growing up and more with sharp vocals that range from Erykah Badu to jazz greats over soulful hip-hop beats.

Lennox came up with the Cole-featured title track while she was "putting shea butter in my hair and ruining my friend's couch."

"Because everybody knows how messy shea butter is," she said, laughing.

The in-your-face "BMO," which samples Galt MacDermot's "Space" — famously sampled by Busta Rhymes for his 1996 debut single "Woo Hah!! Got You All In Check" — also came to Lennox effortlessly.

"The way (the producer) flipped the beat to me gave me Missy Elliott (vibes)," she said. "I was hearing Missy. I was hearing Total. I was hearing Aaliyah."

The song's video elicited a response from Elliott — who tweeted that she rocks out to Lennox's music. Bruno Mars blessed the video with a simple one-character tweet: the fire emoji.

"I've always wanted to find the right singer that could not only excite me and make me become a fan, but also could represent what we stand for as a brand and as a label," Ib said. "I think Ari she has something so soulful about her that reminds you of the music we came up on, but she has a certain edginess and the writing style of today that I think connects to the kids and the young women of today, and the young men of today."

Lennox counts singers like Whitney Houston, Toni Braxton, Laury Hill, Badu and Brandy as influences, and said when she was just three years old her grandmother told her she had "the voice of an angel."

"My other grandma said that I would write songs under her pen in North Carolina," Lennox said. "I remember watching 'Apollo' with my other grandma — I have so many grandmas — and seeing these young girls sing ... I knew in that moment that I wanted to sing."

At 18, she pursued music seriously. She won a few competitions on the popular BET music video countdown show "106 & Park," and auditioned for "American Idol."

"None of that ever worked out," she said.

She even auditioned for Diddy's band, which was documented on MTV in 2009 as "Making His Band."

"And I remember they liked me a lot, they knew I stood out, but they just knew I wasn't ready. I appreciate that so much because I feel like all of those no's made room for the most beautiful yes — that was Dreamville," she said.

Along with "Shea Butter Baby," Lennox can also be heard on the Dreamville compilation album "Revenge of the Dreamers III," which debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's 200 albums chart in July and features the multiplatinum Cole hit "Middle Child."

Lennox is on tour with another breakout star, Lizzo, and said she's grown tremendously in the three years since she flew out to see Cole for the first time.

"I feel like I've really made them proud. I know it may come off cheesy, but if somebody's going to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars, even more, into you, you want to make sure you can return that; you want to make sure they feel good about their investment," she said. "Now I do feel OK being the first lady (of Dreamville) because I've shown them I can keep up. I can keep up with Cole."

CHRISTOPHER SMITH, INVISION/AP

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Only in 'Movies'

A slasher film villain takes questions (and other things) in Serrano's latest

BY THOMAS FLOYD

Special to The Washington Post

Shea Serrano was camped on his couch in December 2017, "watching something stupid," when his phone started buzzing. He opened the message and saw the screenshot: a list of President Barack Obama's 12 favorite books of the year, with Serrano's collection "Basketball (And Other Things)" making the cut.

"I assumed somebody saw it, saw that I was not on there, added me to it and then sent it to me," Serrano says. "It was like, 'Ha-ha, LOL, whatever.'"

So he put his phone down, thinking nothing of it. But the texts kept coming. Finally, he checked Obama's Facebook page for himself.

"And I saw my name on there," he says. "Then I started picturing him reading some of the sillier stuff that I wrote in there, like, 'Oh my God, the president read a thing I wrote about J.J. Redick's penis.'"

The nod from Obama was one of many accolades for the best-selling "Basketball (And Other Things)." Now, Serrano is back with the second book in the series, "Movies (And Other Things)," which hit shelves Oct. 8.

Serrano's new book follows the same Q&A format as the previous one. Serrano, a staff writer for the Ringer website, uses idiosyncratic humor — plus illustrations by Arturo Torres — to explore a film-themed question in each of his 30 chapters.

Among them: "Were the 'Jurassic Park' raptors just misundertstood?" "Which movie death hurt you the most as an adult?" and "Which race was white-savored the best by Kevin Costner?"

Speaking from his office in Houston, Serrano discussed putting together the second installment in his "And Other Things" series.

The Washington Post: So how did "Movies (And Other Things)" come about?

Serrano: I really liked working on the basketball book. I liked the format and how set everything was. Each chapter is its own thing, and you don't have to read it in order. You can read whatever chapters you want, and you're fine. But they all sort of have the same feel and a through line that connects them all. When Arturo and I decided, "All right, let's do another book," it just made sense to us.

How did the success of "Basketball (And Other Things)" affect your approach to this book?

I try to make it a point, whenever I'm writing stuff, to just assume nobody is ever going to read it. That makes it easier.



Shea Serrano

You got John Leguizamo and Don Cheadle to write the foreword and afterward, respectively. How did you react when they joined the project?

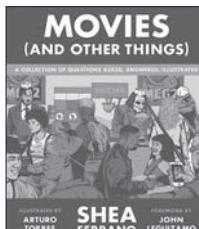
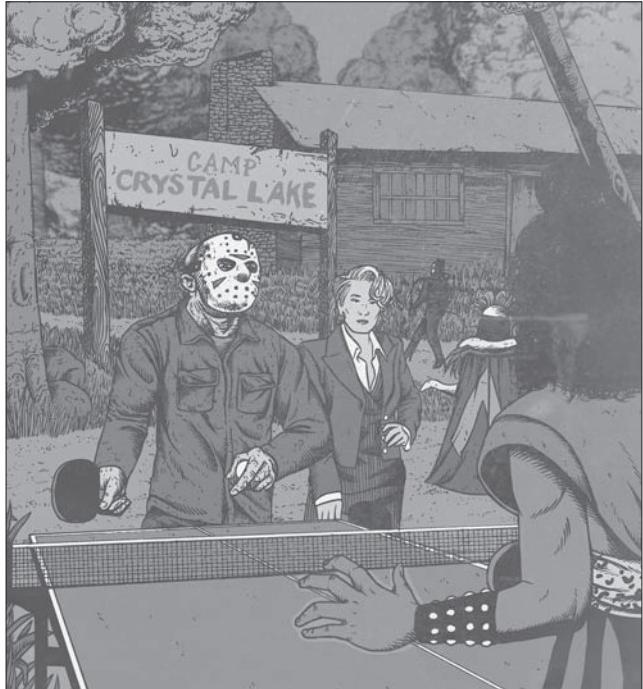
Oh dude, I ... lost my mind. I've followed John Leguizamo's career for 20 years, and we've had this very one-sided relationship where anything he's in, I'm going to go see it. It's the same with Don Cheadle. He showed up in my life very early and has been there for a long, long time. He's always been just this exceptionally cool movie star. So to be able to have them do the foreword and afterward was a big achievement for me. But more than anything else, I just wanted to use it as an excuse to try to have a conversation with these two guys that I've looked up to.

This book tackles a lot of amusing questions. What was the most enjoyable chapter to write?

In my head right now, they all suck and they're all terrible and none of them are funny or smart, because I've just gone so, so many times through them. But if I had to pick one, I think "Who's in the perfect heist movie crew?" was the most purely fun to write. I had to spend two weeks watching every heist movie that I could think of, or that was on any list on the internet anywhere, to make sure that I didn't miss anything. I could think of worse ways to spend a couple weeks than watching "Set It Off" and "Point Break" and "Ocean's Eleven," "Twelve," "Thirteen" and "Eight."

One highlight is the chapter in which you imagine "Halloween" villain Michael Myers conducting an NBA-style post-game press conference after a night of slayings. What did you find so entertaining about that premise?

What's the opposite of what you know Michael Myers to be? To me, that would be this sort of secretly funny, almost tender person who likes to talk about the stuff that he's doing. He



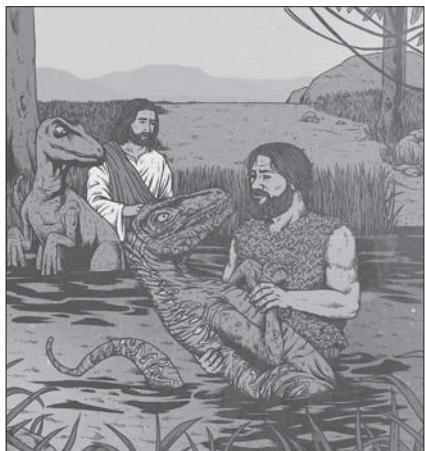
Shea Serrano reteams with Arturo Torres for "Movies," the second installment in the "And Other Things" series. Imagery includes Jesus Christ and John the Baptist baptizing "Jurassic Park" raptors and "Friday the 13th" villain Jason Voorhees playing ping-pong.

Arturo Torres photos

never one time says one single word ever in any of the movies, so if I got to pick a dream scenario, I would like to see him answering a bunch of questions. It was just a silly, dumb thing that made me laugh.

You made the Marvel Cinematic Universe chapter a transcript of a conversation you had with your three young sons after seeing "Avengers: Endgame." How did you land on that concept?

I thought it would be interest-



ing in 10 years to look back and have this conversation saved forever. It's going to be in the book for a long, long time, and even if it's not meaningful to anybody else, it's going to mean a lot to me to think back to that time in all of our lives. As silly as the idea of Iron Man fighting Thanos is, it's also a moment that we had together and a bunch of other people had, and let's be a

little sentimental for at least this one chapter.

What's next for you and the "And Other Things" series?

We're definitely doing a third "And Other Things." But I don't know exactly what we're going to do just yet. I would guess it's between rap or television. Both of those would be fun projects to spend two years of my life working on with Arturo again.

WEEKEND: BOOK REVIEW



DARK ACTS

Ronan Farrow's 'Catch and Kill' follows a reporter's noirish road to uncovering alleged sexual abuse at NBC, in Hollywood

By ELIZABETH BRUENIG
The Washington Post

While political unrest roils the nation, left and right unite over a shared sense that nefarious elites plot to abuse and exploit us, their lessers. It is easy to dismiss these sorts of anxieties as delusional, their hosts as paranoiacs. But the trouble — and the great revelation of Ronan Farrow's book "Catch and Kill" — is that the conspiracy theorists are essentially correct.

Farrow's dark memoir of the era in which he helped unearth the abuses of Harvey Weinstein unfolds like a classic noir. He opens on a suspicious conversation between a pair of criminals, and then whisks the reader into his own world as it was then — surprisingly bleak, and mottled with disappointment. Farrow depicts himself as an outsider, demoralized by the failure of his short-lived MSNBC program,

"Ronan Farrow Daily," and convinced that he lacks the cool and gravitas of the longtime TV journalists who surrounded him at NBC. He has his reasons for being especially concerned about issues regarding sexual abuse; at the outset, he remarks on the allegations his sister Dylan has made against his father, Woody Allen, and seems to suggest that they were formative for him.

A tone of cold dread sets in before Farrow realizes he's in the presence of some truly despicable characters. Matt Lauer's first appearance in the book, for instance, is subtly sinister — Farrow innocently observes as Lauer pushes a button on his desk, and his office door swings shut. (The infamous button, for which a chapter is named, would eventually become a key feature in the sexual misconduct allegations against the former NBC "Today" show host.) As Farrow begins digging into the Weinstein case, other dark threads unspool around him, including those involving Lauer. The network superiors seem indifferent to their anchor's alleged abuse, and Farrow is soon navigating a web of deceit and intrigue spangled with the names of some of the most powerful media figures.

At the heart of every great noir is a conspiracy of evil that imbues the initial crime uncovered by the hero with a weightier resonance than was immediately obvious. So it goes with "Catch and Kill." Weinstein turns out not only to be a sexually exploitative megalomaniac, but also a thoroughly connected one, whose Rolodex of debtors, leeches and sycophants included the Clinton family, the Trump family and seemingly all of Hollywood. (In one stomach-turning episode, a wormy publicist trying to put Farrow off Weinstein's trail calls to say that "Hillary Clinton had finished a greenroom conversation with Weinstein, her old friend and fundraiser, then stepped onstage to give a speech at Women in the World.") Farrow is, fortunately, not dissuaded by the creep's proximity to power. When the army of connections enlisted to pressure Farrow fails to get him to drop the story, Weinstein turns to less figurative militants — Black Cube, a private investigative agency staffed by former Israeli spooks, who give Farrow cause to fear for his life.

Observers of the weirder aspects of the news cycle might note similarities to Pizzagate, an invented scandal in which Clinton-linked operatives such as David Brock and John Podesta were alleged to have been involved in a child prostitution ring run out of the basement of a Washington, D.C., pizza parlor. That was nonsense. But the scandal surrounding Jeffrey Epstein — the late financier of mysterious means who trafficked teenage girls for sex with him and his wealthy friends — was decidedly real, and involved a similar roster of rich and powerful characters, including Les Wexner, the mogul behind Victoria's Secret; Britain's Prince Andrew; and Bill Clinton. (Unsurprisingly, Epstein and Weinstein were at least acquaintances.)

By the time Farrow gets around to the allegations against Lauer — to which the former NBC anchor has now responded with vehement denial — one begins to wonder if all these conspiracies of exploitation are really parallel, or whether they somehow intersect. Is it possible that Bill Cosby, Brian Singer, Les Moonves, Epstein and Weinstein could have all simultaneously carried on years-long campaigns of sexual abuse in the claustrophobic, insular world of media without drawing upon the same resources? Or is the media — and by extension politics, its symbiotic partner — corrupt by its nature, structured by its own power brokers to permit victimization on a grand scale?

"Catch and Kill" has already resulted in precisely the sorts of legal threats and intimidation campaigns it details in its pages, suggesting that, at the very least, media moguls in the business of villainy share a playbook. Dylan Howard, an executive at American Media Inc. — the parent company of the National Enquirer, whose service of obtaining and burying incriminating stories for rich clients such as Weinstein and Trump gives the book its title — has sued Farrow and his publisher, Little, Brown and Co., in hopes of halting publication. Neither Farrow nor his publisher have shown signs of backing down.

And that's a good thing. Exposing the rot inside the media has had the simultaneous effect of discrediting journalism as a profession, which is perhaps the greatest unspoken reality of the #MeToo era. Journalists played an enormous role in uncovering these endless scandals, but the abuse by journalists themselves also helped keep them submerged for as long as they were. (Farrow writes that Weinstein, for instance, used knowledge of Lauer's alleged misconduct to suppress stories about his own foul play, which might otherwise have appeared on NBC.) It isn't difficult to understand why ordinary people, reviewing a full accounting of the facts, might conclude that they can't necessarily trust what they see — or don't see — in the news.

Such is the great political crisis of these times. One can't blame people for doubting the truth when there are so many well-publicized lies, and one can't blame people for believing in conspiracy theories when there are so many conspiracies. Maybe these scandals are limited to particular spheres of influence — and maybe they're not; how can one expect a rational onlooker to be certain, when those tasked with exposing the truth have themselves been exposed as liars?

Journalism like Farrow's — fearless, exhaustive, even reckless in its disregard for personal or professional consequences — is the only way to begin to correct this problem. Still, even the noblest journalism can't reverse the fact of what happened: namely, that some of the most influential people in our country have long perpetrated organized sex crimes against women and children. Farrow might be able to restore some faith in journalism, but restoring trust in the wide range of institutions implicated in these heinous scandals lies beyond the reach of a single book. But he does what he can — he bears witness, and offers a harrowing portrait of sin and depravity in the bleak tones they merit. If there is any lesson in noir, it's that the darkness is always all around you.



WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



TNS



California Healthline

Wearers can take a puff of nicotine (or marijuana) through this hoodie's drawstring.

Hoodie the latest discreet vaping device

In yet another twist for worried parents: Meet the vaping hoodie. This high school fashion mainstay — defined by a hood with drawstrings — is now available as a vaping device, ready to deliver a puff of nicotine (or marijuana) anywhere, anytime. Including in the classroom.

It marks an addition to the fleet of discreet — some would say camouflaged — vaping devices that have teachers and parents struggling to monitor the usage of a product that has surged in popularity among high school-aged kids in the past two years, despite laws in most states that allow sales only to people 18 and up. A computer mouse. A phone case. Backpacks. USB jump drives. The vaping kit options colorfully advertised online are fashionable and many.

Juul, which dominates the e-cigarette trade, and other manufacturers publicly tout their devices as tools for adults looking to get a nicotine fix without the toxins associated with burning tobacco. But the crowded market of devices and accessories that has sprung up around vaping is filled with products that seem tailored to teenagers who want to keep their use secret — and according to parents and teachers, are all but impossible to keep out of kids' hands.

Preliminary federal data released this month show more than one-quarter of the nation's high schoolers had reported vaping in the previous 30 days, up from 11.7% in 2017. As the teen vaping scene has exploded, adults have had a hard time keeping up. In a 2018 survey, the Truth Initiative, an anti-tobacco advocacy group, surveyed middle and high school teachers on vaping and found that fewer than half recognized a photo of a Juul, the most commonly used device. A palm-sized tool that charges via USB, it's easily mistaken for a flash drive to the uninformed.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to investigate a spurt of vaping-related lung illnesses, mostly affecting young people. Authorities have reported more than 1,000 cases of suspected cases nationwide. Seven of the cases have resulted in death.

Two states — Michigan and New York — have moved to ban sales of most flavored e-cigarette products, which are popular among young people; and President Donald Trump this month said he would launch a similar effort at the federal level.

— Erie Times

Kaiser Health News

DOUBLE DIP

Twin birth rate in the US drops as IVF becomes more cautious

BY MARIE McCULLOUGH
The Philadelphia Inquirer

After climbing relentlessly for more than three decades, the U.S. twin birth rate has inched downward for the last four years, new federal data show.

The rate declined 1% a year between 2014 and 2018 — although that still translated to 123,536 twins born in 2018, or 32.6 duos for every 1,000 births.

The report from the National Center for Health Statistics doesn't offer a reason for the apparent trend. But the best guesses are that the nation's 480 IVF (in vitro fertilization) clinics have finally gotten serious about avoiding twins because dual births are far riskier and costlier than singletons.

The prescription for preventing pairs is simple: Put just one embryo at a time into the would-be mother.

"The declines in twin births are among older moms and white moms — groups that are more likely to have fertility treatment," said epidemiologist Joyce Martin, lead author of the new report. "It does suggest an association" between the twin birth rate and IVF.

Twins can occur with old-fashioned reproduction and with fertility treatment that involves insemination, but experts agree IVF — in which eggs are fertilized in a lab dish — has driven the nation's 79% increase in twins since 1980.

The latest report on IVF clinics bolsters the idea that IVF is now behind the national downturn. Twins made up less than 13% of the high-tech births in 2017 — down from 44% a year through much of the past decade.

"And I think it's going to continue to improve. No question," said Kevin Doody, a Bedford, Texas, fertility specialist and past president of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology (SART), which publishes the report on IVF clinics.

Beginning in 2004, SART and another professional group, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM), have issued increasingly conservative guidelines for how many embryos to transfer to a patient's womb. As a result, triplets and higher multiples are now a rarity — less than 0.3% of all IVF births.

But because IVF is usually not covered by health insurance and is largely unregulated in the United States, "single embryo transfer" has been a tough sell. Even though studies have shown that adding a second embryo doesn't boost the odds of a birth for women with favorable profiles, both patients and doctors have been reluctant to give up the presumed hedge.

Historically, many couples viewed twins as an ideal outcome. And many doctors failed to stress the increased risks for mother and babies, including preeclampsia, cesarean section, prematurity, even death. (Not to mention that prenatal care, delivery, and the first year of medical care of twins cost about five times more than a singleton.)

So what has changed?

First, the technology for growing, selecting and freezing embryos has improved.

"The tipping point happened a few years ago when success rates seemed high enough that it was reasonable" to rely on one embryo at a time, said Alan Penzias, a specialist at Boston IVF and chair of the ASRM practice committee.

Second, doctors — and social media — are doing a better job of explaining the realities to prospective patients.

"It's been shown in multiple studies, when insurance covers IVF, patients' acceptance of single-embryo transfer is uniform. Paying out-of-pocket, patients ask for more embryos," said Larry Barmat, a fertility specialist at Abington Reproductive Medicine. "It's our job to educate them that two embryos is not in their best interests."

Penzias said, "I get so many fewer patients saying, 'I want twins' now than 15 years ago. There's been a shift in perception."

A third factor: In 2017, ASRM further refined its guidelines, recommending that only one embryo be used "in patients of any age" as long as they had favorable medical characteristics.

There is still plenty of room for improvement. The 2017 clinic report shows that while the majority of women under 35 — the most fertile age group — had single-embryo transfers, most women ages 35 to 40 had multiple embryos.

Also, a recent survey by FertilityIQ found more than a quarter of patients felt insufficiently informed about the risks of multiple births. FertilityIQ, a website aimed at patients, was founded by Deborah and Jake Anderson-Bialis after they went through treatment.

"As we work to understand why multiple-embryo transfer remains stubbornly high in the U.S., we would be wise to pay closer attention to how patients are being educated on the trade-offs of their treatment options," concludes their survey.

WEEKEND: FAMILY

'Sesame Street' tackles opioid addiction crisis



PHOTOS BY BEBETO MATTHEWS/AP

Salia Woodbury, 10, left, from Irvine, Calif., is on set Aug. 6 with "Sesame Street" muppet Kermit and puppeteer Haley Jenkins during a taping about parental addiction in New York. Salia's parents are in recovery after struggling with addiction. Salia shares her experience with the show's Kermit — whose muppet character has a mom who is also in recovery.

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

"**S**esame Street" is taking a new step to try to help kids navigate life in America — it's tackling the opioid crisis.

Sesame Workshop is exploring the backstory of Kermit, a bright green, yellow-haired friend of Elmo's whose mother is battling addiction. The initiative is part of the Sesame Street in Communities resources online.

"Sesame Street" creators said they turned to the issue of addiction since data shows 5.7 million children under age 11 live in households with a parent with substance use disorder.

"There's nothing else out there that addresses substance abuse for young, young kids from their perspective," said Kama Einhorn, a senior content manager with Sesame Workshop. It's also a chance to model to adults a way to explain what they're going through to kids, and to offer simple strategies to cope.

"If a parent at their most vulnerable — at the worst of their struggle — can take one thing away when they watch it with their kids, then that serves the purpose," Einhorn said.

This summer, The Associated Press looked on as puppeteers, producers and show creators crammed into a small studio in the nonprofit's Manhattan headquarters to tape some of the upcoming segments.

Karli, voiced and manipulated by puppeteer Haley Jenkins, was joined by a young girl — 10-year-old Salia Woodbury, whose parents are in recovery.

"Hi, it's me, Karli. I'm here with my friend Salia. Both of our parents

have had the same problem — addiction," Karli told the camera.

"My mom and dad told me that addiction is a sickness," Salia said.

"Yeah, a sickness that makes people feel like they have to take drugs or drink alcohol to feel OK. My mom was having a hard time with addiction and I felt like my family was the only one going through it. But now I've met so many other kids like us. It makes me feel like we're not alone," the puppet continued.

These boys and girls are the first to get hurt and the last, unfortunately, to get help.'

Jerry Moe
children's therapist

"Right, we're not alone," Salia responded. "And it's OK to open up to people about our feelings."

In the segment, Karli and Salia each hold up hand-drawn pictures of flowers, with multiple petals representing "big feelings" — like anger, sadness and happiness. They offer ways to feel better, including art and breathing exercises.

The segment leans on carefully considered language. Creators prefer "addiction" to "substance abuse" and "recovery" to "sobriety" because those terms are clearer to children.

Karli had already been introduced as a puppet in foster care earlier this year but viewers will understand why her mother had to go away for a while.

Karli talks about her family to Abby Cadabby in another segment, and Karli tells Elmo about how she mistakenly used to think her mom's addiction was her fault. Karli, Elmo,



Rosita and Abby Cadabby also sing "We're Special and So Are You." Viewers are referred to free online resources in English and Spanish such as videos, storybooks, digital interactives and games.

Children's therapist Jerry Moe, the national director of the Hazelden Betty Ford Children's Program, helped craft the segments and resources, saying he was grateful to help since there's been a lack of resources for the preschool age-group.

"These boys and girls are the first to get hurt and, unfortunately, the last to get help," he said. "For them to see Karli and learn that it's not their fault and this stuff is hard to talk about and it's OK to have these feelings, that's important. And that there's hope."

"Sesame Street," which began airing in 1969, has a long history of tackling topical issues in a way approachable to children. It's had puppets with HIV, jailed parents and autism, explored homelessness, women's rights and even girls singing about loving their hair.

Salia's parents — Sam and Jaana Woodbury, who are raising four girls in Orange County, Calif.

— said they welcomed the show's attention on opioid and alcohol addiction. They've been in recovery for about eight years.

"When I was going through addiction, I felt extremely alone and isolated. I didn't have any connection to the outside world," said Jaana Woodbury. "I think it's amazing that 'Sesame Street' is using their platform to share resources to help other women and fathers."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Safety is sanity for football moms

“On no!” I gasped Oct. 6, in a crowded Rhode Island bar, as I watched 6-foot-5-inch Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph drop like a rag doll after a helmet-to-helmet hit by Ravens safety Earl Thomas.

The Twin Willows was the closest bar with an NFL package, so my husband Francis and I sat at a table, looking across the room to a small television mounted beside the bathrooms, because it was the only one tuned to a game other than the Patriots. After 11 military moves, we were accustomed to finding creative ways to watch our favorite team. Over the years, we watched pixelated streaming images on our desktop computer, in the middle of the night on Armed Forces Network, and at bars with an NFL package in California, Virginia, Florida and Rhode Island.

The sound of the Steelers game was muted at Twin Willows, so we huddled around my phone, listening to delayed online audio, amid Patriots' broadcasts blaring from a dozen other televisions in the bar. The New England fans surrounding us eventually took notice of the Steelers' crisis, and despite being a spoiled rotten group of team-centric fans, they, too, gasped at the gruesome playback videos of the hit that rendered Rudolph unconscious.

As the 24-year-old lay motionless on the field surrounded by medics, coaches and visibly anxious teammates, we all watched with our mouths agape. My mind flashed with silent dread: What if it's a head injury? Concussion? Broken neck? Paralysis? Is playing football worth that?

"What must his mother be thinking right now?" I wondered.

Ask any mom her opinion of the safety of tackle football, and you will most likely get an earful about the scientifically proven risks associated with helmet-to-helmet hits, concussion injuries and long-term neurological damage. But ask a football mom like me, and the answer will be a conflicted mix of genuine concern for the players and love for the sport. My son played high school football at three duty stations, and I always volunteered to help his teams. The many unpaid duties required of a football mom include having affection for the institution of American football.

Why else would we bake dozens of cookies, cook vats of lasagna, write hundreds of emails, raise thousands of dollars, populate complicated spreadsheets, make copies of game programs, run concession booths, write grant requests and file 50-plus IRS tax-exempt status forms on behalf of the Booster's Club?

There's just something about football. The crispness of the fall air; the sound of marching bands; the Friday night lights and the Sunday afternoon tailgates; the bowls of game-day chili and platters of chicken wings; the strategic plays and raw athleticism of this all-American sport.

But even football moms secretly fear the increasing risks involved in playing football. A 2019 study shows that a player's risk of developing the devastating degenerative disease, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), which causes memory loss, dementia and depression, double after 5.3 years of playing the game. The study relied on analysis of donor brains from deceased football players. A similar study in 2017 found that, of 111 brains of NFL players donated, 110 were found to have CTE.

After we waited through an agonizing commercial break, the camera showed Rudolph sitting up, talking, and then walking slowly with the help of his teammates to the locker rooms. He was whisked to the hospital and diagnosed with a concussion. (He returned to practice only four days later under concussion protocol orders.)

To my surprise, all the Patriots fans in the bar that day had been watching the small muted television to see if the young player was okay. Why? Because although football fans love the full-contact sport enough to suffer various inconveniences and aggravations to watch it, we are also human enough to know that no sport is worth devastating the athletes to whom play it.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesofflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesofflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

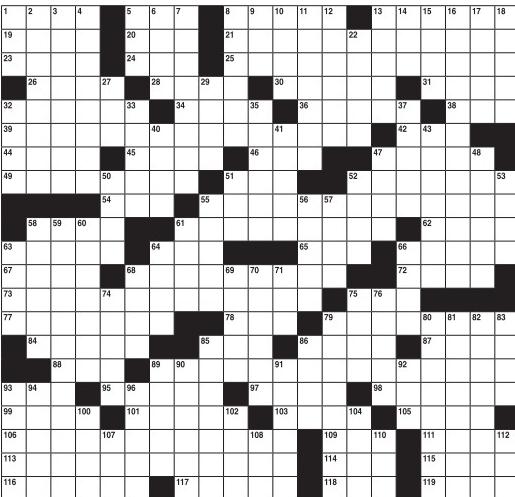
INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERINGS

BY HOWARD BARKIN AND VICTOR BAROOS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Howard Barkin is a software quality-assurance specialist — and an ace crossword solver — from Hillsborough, N.J. He won the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament in 2016 and is a perennial top-10 finisher. Victor Baroos, who also competes, is a professor of biomedical engineering at the University of Minnesota. The men became acquainted through the tournament when their last names appeared alphabetically adjacent in the results. The idea for this puzzle was Howard's. They worked back and forth by email to make it. — W.S.

- A C R O S S**
- What helicopter rotors do
 - ____ to "Psyche"
 - Bartók and Lugozi
 - 13 Seven Sisters school that went coed in 1969
 - 19 Famous feature of the Florence Cathedral
 - 20 Romulus, exempli gratia
 - 21 It goes up with alcohol consumption
 - 23 Cereal mascot since 1933
 - 24 N.Y.C.-based dance troupe
 - 25 ↑ Memorials
 - 26 Psalm 63 opening
 - 28 Unable to choose
 - 30 Blood drive worker
 - 31 On the way
 - 32 Many
 - 34 Tactless
 - 36 Marsh flora
 - 38 Rapper Lil' ____ X
 - 39 ↓ Journalist and author
 - 42 Maui setting: Abbr.
 - 44 Downwind
 - 45 Mimic
 - 46 Quarry, e.g.
 - 47 Raise one's spirits
 - 49 Weighed on
 - 51 Gangster's gun
 - 52 Large print source
- D O W N**
- 1 M.S. units
 - 2 Site of the first Ironman race (1978)
 - 3 Words accompanying "Uh-oh!"
 - 4 Moved, as in a greenhouse
 - 5 ___ pro nobis
 - 6 Factor affecting a bond's rating
 - 7 Took by threat
 - 8 Actor on Time's list of the 100 most important people of the 20th century
 - 87 Information on a game box
 - 88 The so-called "winter blues," for short
 - 89 ↓ Noted politician and orator
 - 93 "Honor"-able org.
 - 94 California's ___ River
 - 95 Gush
 - 97 Largest cell in the human body
 - 98 Got by
 - 99 Yeats's homeland
 - 101 Brings up
 - 103 Award for Best Moment, e.g.
 - 105 Parts of a portfolio: Abbr.
 - 106 The "I" of 10-1, say
 - 108 I American composer and lyricist
 - 109 Canyon maker
 - 111 Kissers
 - 113 I can't understand this at all!"
 - 114 Half of a blackjack
 - 115 Hideout
 - 116 Star of the "Taken" film series
 - 117 Wind ____
 - 118 "Eric Canal" mule
 - 119 Certain IDs

- 10 Reclined**
- 11 Hex'd
- 12 Playing on both sides
- 13 "____" (sticker message)
- 14 "I'll take that as ____"
- 15 Award for Best Moment, e.g.
- 16 Iconic environmental book
- 17 Maker of the classic Radarange
- 18 Concludes one's case
- 22 "Ghosts" playwright
- 27 Forest mother
- 29 River through Dortmund
- 32 Model of vengeful obsession
- 33 Part of a Swiss bank account
- 35 One good at reading emotions
- 37 Boating hazard
- 40 Something a house might be built on
- 41 Epigrammatic
- 43 Brand in the dessert aisle
- 47 Cle cle, collectors, for short
- 48 Grow a fondness for
- 50 Grub
- 51 Assoc.
- 52 Includes
- 53 Melts
- 55 Left on board
- 56 High percentage of criminals?
- 57 No longer green, say
- 58 Popular sans-serif typeface



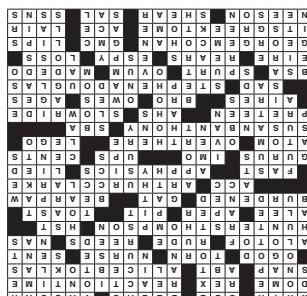
- 59 Tension based on a line by Gertrude Stein
- 60 Major source of coffee beans
- 61 Mass-produced response?
- 63 Inspiration for a horror movie?
- 65 Nobelist Pavlov
- 66 Hammer feature
- 68 UK, honours
- 69 Choreographer Twyla
- 70 Trio often heard in December
- 71 Northern borders?
- 74 Can't do without
- 75 Runners support it
- 76 Place of security
- 79 What causes a will-o'-the-wisp
- 80 Ann and Andy, notably
- 81 The King of Latin Pop
- 82 Popular sports news website
- 83 ExxonMobil abroad
- 85 Promise
- 86 Heavy responsibility
- 89 Comment following an unrepresentative admission
- 90 Symbolic socioeconomic divider
- 91 Less bumpy
- 92 Suffix with sex or text
- 93 Get the show on the road
- 94 Número de Maravillas del Mundo Antiguo
- 96 Get one's hair just right
- 100 Bits of work
- 102 Something a cobbler may hold
- 104 "It's fun to stay at the ____" (1978 hit lyric)
- 107 Miracle—
- 108 Org. for docs
- 110 Bit of animation
- 112 About one-quarter of a high school: Abbr.

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

Afterlife on TV

Ghost hunts revisited in 'The Holzer Files'

BY LYNN ELBER

Associated Press

Ask the daughter of paranormal researcher and "Ghostbusters" inspiration Hans Holzer whether she's got any scary Halloween memories to share, and Alexandra Holzer doesn't disappoint.

She was about 12 years old and getting ready to go trick-or-treating while her dad typed busily away in his New York City apartment, she recalled. Heading toward her bedroom to get out a favorite costume, a witch's cape, she was stopped short by a hallow-day-worthy sight.

"My black cape was floating in front of the dresser, and the drawer where I kept the cape was open. I just stood there like, 'What do I do? What am I looking at?'" she said. "I ran away into the living room and I took a deep breath. I didn't go get my father because I knew he would say, 'Go back in and investigate it!' So I bravely went back in and the drawer had been closed. The cape was inside, and I thought I was crazy."

It was a mild encounter with what Holzer speculated was a mischievous spirit, certainly less hair-raising than the goings-on that Hans Holzer, who died in 2009 at age 89, spent decades investigating and some of which are revisited in the new Travel Channel series, "The Holzer Files."

The Whaley House, a historic San Diego home where visitors claimed to have encountered ghostly apparitions and heard disembodied voices, is the subject of the latest episode. Holzer and a medium reported contact in 1961 with the house's late residents and a 19th-century thief said to have been hanged on the site, but he felt more remained to be found.

Enter the series' "dedicated paranormal team," as the channel describes researcher and radio host Dave Schrader, psychic medium Cindy Kaza and technician Shane Pittman, who search for evidence bolstering Holzer's original findings and make their own discovery. The trio is joined on the series by Alexandra Holzer, an author who has



ALEXANDRA HOLZER/AP

Alexandra Holzer promotes her new Travel Channel series, "The Holzer Files," in which a "dedicated paranormal team" revisits locations investigated by researcher Hans Holzer.

continued her father's work, and researcher-producer Gabe Roth.

Take it with a grain of skepticism, or a salt mine's worth, but ghost stories are enduring. Upcoming episodes, which draw on Hans Holzer's case files that include audio tapes, letters and other material, look at places with haunted histories, including the Barnstable House in Cape Cod, Mass., and the Howard-Dickinson house in Henderson, Texas.

Holzer was born in Vienna, Austria, and held post-graduate degrees in comparative religion and parapsychology. He wrote more than 100 books starting with "Ghost Hunter" in 1963 and including "Murder in Amityville" in 1963 and including "Murder in Amityville." His account of a Long Island, N.Y., house where a family's 1974 killing was followed by claims of eerie events was the basis for the 1982 film "Amityville II: The Possession."

Holzer scoffed at the movie, dismissing it as "all Hollywood," his daughter said, while he found "Ghostbusters" to be funny and "endearing." Dan Aykroyd, who starred in

and co-wrote the 1984 comedy, has said he had inspiration for "Ghostbusters" in Holzer's research.

Alexandra Holzer said her father was rigorous in scrutinizing reports of brushes with the dead, whom he considered fellow human beings who are troubled and unable to move on. While he used mediums in his research, he came to believe that psychic gifts are universal.

"What my father had realized over the years is everybody has the ability; everybody is aware and intuitive. It's just a question of whether or not we're open enough and ready to receive that information and have a belief system that something bigger than us is around us 24/7," she said.

She hopes the series introduces her dad to new generations, a feeling she's certain he shares.

"He's very aware of the show ... and I'm sure he's watching very closely to see, hopefully, a good, positive ripple wave to go among those not familiar with the work," she said.

Dave Matthews calls Rock Hall nom 'a little bit insane'

Associated Press

Dave Matthews is having a hard time imagining his band being included on the same Rock and Roll Hall of Fame list as other musical icons such as Whitney Houston.

The Dave Matthews Band frontman said their recent nomination for the Hall's 2020 class was unexpected and a "little bit insane." He said he feels honored to be among music's elite while promoting his newly-launched board games called Chickapig and 25 Outlaws.

"It's a real honor," Matthews told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "Even if they stick us in a holding pen for a few years, that's OK. Just to get on that list. I can't believe I'm on a list with Whitney Houston, Motorhead and T. Rex. That's pretty awesome."

The seven-member band is among 16 acts nominated, a list that also includes Soundgarden, The Doobie Brothers, Nine Inch Nails, Judas Priest, Thin Lizzy, Rufus featuring Chaka Khan, Depeche Mode, Kraftwerk, MCS and Todd Rundgren. The 35th annual induction ceremony will take place

May 2 in Cleveland.

The official inductees will be announced in January.

Matthews called this moment of his life exciting, especially with the release of the board game he created with Brian Calhoun, a longtime friend and business partner. The singer-guitarist said they got into the board game business to create a product to bring families and friends together with the hopes of putting their cellphones down.

"So if the end of times comes, not saying that it's going to happen, but if it does happen and all of our phones die, we can play Chickapig," Matthews joked. "We won't be completely lost."

Chickapig is being dubbed a lightly strategic social chess game that features chicken-pig hybrids that attempt to maneuver past hay bales and a pooping cow. The game is designed for people 4 and older.

25 Outlaws is based on poker, but with a "Wild West" twist. This game is more suited for younger adults and older players since they are tasked with trying to eliminate rival outlaw gangs.

Both games are currently on sale in major retail stores.



AMY HARRIS, INVISION/AP

The Dave Matthews Band (pictured: Dave Matthews) is among the 16 acts nominated for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's 2020 class.

2 writers seek credit for Lizzo's 'Truth Hurts'

Associated Press

There's a debate about the truth behind Lizzo's "Truth Hurts."

Lizzo's breakthrough tune, which spent six weeks on top of Billboard's Hot 100 chart this year, features the signature line: "I just took a DNA test, turns out I'm 100 percent that bitch." The lyric originated from a 2017 tweet by singer Mina Lioness and was turned into a popular meme, which was then used in Lizzo's song "Healthy," created in 2017.

The songwriting brothers Justin and Jeremiah Raisen, who worked on "Healthy," say they deserve writing credit on "Truth Hurts" since the song borrows from "Healthy," a tune they co-wrote.

"We were never contacted about being credited for the use of the parts of "Healthy" (melody, lyrics, and chords) that appear in "Truth Hurts," Justin Raisen wrote Tuesday on Instagram, explaining that they worked on "Healthy" in April 2017.

The songwriters credited on "Truth Hurts" are Lizzo, Ricky Reed, Tele and Jesse Saint John. "Truth Hurts" was originally released in September 2017 but got a boost this year after it was featured in the Netflix film "Some Great."

Lizzo's lawyer said in a statement that "The Raisens are not writers of" Lizzo's international hit. "They did not collaborate with Lizzo or anyone else to create this song, and they did not help write any of the material that they now seek to profit from, which is why they expressly renounced any claim to the work, in writing, months ago," Cynthia Arato said in a statement Wednesday.

Other news

■ Two lawyers linked to the so-called Panama Papers are asking a federal judge to stop Netflix's upcoming release of "The Laundromat," which they say defames them as criminal masterminds and may affect criminal cases against them. Netflix is scheduled to release the movie Friday. The movie portrays events surrounding the 2015 data breach at the lawyers' firm, Mossack Fonseca, that resulted in the release of more than 11 million documents, called the Panama Papers, showing how some of the world's richest people hide their money.

■ **Ken Burns** is inaugurating an annual prize for makers of historical films with a \$200,000 grant to the people behind "Flannery," an upcoming movie about the late Georgia writer Flannery O'Connor. Burns' nonprofit Better Angels Society is collaborating with philanthropists Jeannie and Jonathan Levine and the Library of Congress in funding the award. A \$50,000 grant is being given to the makers of "Mae West: Dirty Blonde," the awards' runner-up, with four \$25,000 grants given to other finalists.


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Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) is published weekly (days except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1) for 50 cents Monday through Friday and for 75 cents Friday by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Inc., One Penn Center, 10th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Postage paid at San Francisco, CA, Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APG 910-0001.

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OPINION

There's good reporting outside your comfort zone

By GARY ABERNATHY
Special to The Washington Post

HILLSBORO, Ohio

Did President Donald Trump violate his oath of office by pressuring Ukraine to investigate a political opponent? Is he on the verge of impeachment and removal from office? Or are Democrats abusing the impeachment process in pursuit of a political outcome they could not achieve in the 2016 election? Which scenario you embrace is likely reflected by the media sources you trust.

Our growing partisan divide is exacerbated by a news media that is increasingly perceived as wedded to one side or the other. Our most popular information sources are viewed as left or right. Few there are who hold a defendable claim to the vast middle.

While Trump is often wrong when he describes unfavorable coverage as "fake news," I'm critical of those who react too defensively to the claim. As with all such criticism, journalists who are doing their honest best should ignore it and move on. In other cases, the shoe fits.

But Trump's real complaint, shared by his supporters, is about emphasis and packaging. A fact favorable to Trump might be buried in the eighth or ninth paragraph of a New York Times article, but serve as the lead item on Fox News. Both outlets can lay claim to reporting the same details, but the gravity assigned to them is where editorial judgment and, yes, ideology come into play. That's why news consumers who are sincerely interested in forming the most accurate opinions are best served by forcing themselves to wade through the politi-

cal prejudices evident in almost all news media to discern for themselves those reports that have merit.

Publications such as The Washington Post and The New York Times are favoring punching bags of the right until stories appear that counter the critics' narratives, such as the Times' revelation of the Ukraine whistleblower's initial contact with the office of Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., or Trump himself touting Post items he thought were favorable.

In fact, virtually all media outlets employ journalists who lean left or right, sometimes in contrast to the reputations of their respective employers. But strong personal opinions do not necessarily make for bad journalists, and old-fashioned, dispassionate reporting can be found in all corners, if you look for it. I recently wrote that "good journalism is gasping for air," but there are still examples to be found everywhere.

In my neck of the woods, Fox News probably grabs 90 percent of the cable news audience. To be sure, Fox News has excellent reporters, such as Jennifer Griffin covering the Pentagon, Catherine Herridge reporting on intelligence issues and John Roberts at the White House, among many others. Their reports could be broadcast on any other network without changing a word. Likewise, Fox News hosts Chris Wallace and Bret Baier are first-rate journalists by any standards.

But I constantly encourage friends to sample the other channels for a more complete worldview. I was impressed when Fox News' Neil Cavuto recently offered on-air words of praise for several colleagues, and then expressed admiration for competitors across the cable spectrum, includ-

ing Rachel Maddow at MSNBC and Don Lemon and Chris Cuomo at CNN — praise that was returned in-kind by Cuomo and Lemon.

Another Fox News co-worker celebrated by Cavuto was Shepard Smith just days before Smith's surprise announcement that he was stepping down. Smith had long been an outlier in the Fox News lineup with his frequent criticisms of Trump. He prides himself on being a fact-based journalist, but he is increasingly slipping into the opinion trap, making clear his doubts about a Trumpian action or statement. The world needs more journalists whose personal views are indecipherable, but Smith, protestations aside, was not always among them.

Still, Smith's daily presence in the Fox News lineup give the network someone to point to when criticisms arise about its overall allegiance to the president. By contrast, among the three cable news giants, where's a pro-Trump host outside of Fox News?

Just for fun, at 9 p.m. each night, try flipping from Hannity to Maddow to Cuomo, round and round every five or 10 minutes. Counterarguments can be informative. One person's conspiracy theory is another's legitimate question.

People of all political persuasions should spend time each day perusing every major newspaper and the most popular online platforms, as well as sampling all the cable networks, even if it's painful. Why? Because good journalism exists in all those places, and it's worth discovering — even when it's wrapped inside a partisan package.

Gary Abernathy, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is a freelance writer and former newspaper editor based in Hillsboro, Ohio.

Goal of defeating Trump lost as Dems debate direction

By CARL P. LEUBSDORF
The Dallas Morning News

The latest Democratic debate provided a dramatic display of the divide between the advocates of revolution and restoration in the party's presidential race. It also illustrated the contest's revised pecking order.

On one side, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders argued the country needs major structural reforms and defended far-reaching proposals epitomized by the plan offering "Medicare for all."

On the other side, South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar joined former Vice President Joe Biden in seeking more modest programs and warning costly new programs could jeopardize Democratic chances of defeating President Donald Trump.

Tuesday's prime target was Warren, who has led recent polls. Her most aggressive attackers were Buttigieg and Klobuchar, who still harbor hopes of penetrating what has essentially been a three-candidate race among Warren, Biden and Sanders.

Their performances showed they were "really vying for the votes Joe Biden has now" in the hope his recent decline in the polls will continue, said CNN commentator David Axelrod, who was an aide to former President Barack Obama.

If their strength grows, he added, "it could be Biden's expense."

Beyond reflecting differences in the best Democratic path for 2020, the debate sponsored by CNN and The New York Times illustrated some potential problems facing the more sweeping Sanders and Warren proposals. For one thing, polls show the proposal to supplant current health care systems with the government-run "Medicare for all," while popular with Democrats, has less support from the broader

electorate. As Klobuchar pointed out when Warren defended her proposal, "you're making Republican talking points right now, this room."

For another, the president elected next year will inherit a federal budget deficit of close to \$1 trillion and a gridlocked political landscape.

Even if Democrats win a large enough victory to overturn current GOP control of the Senate, they'll have at best a small majority, requiring Republicans to support to enact major legislation.

The debate covered a range of issues, but it didn't take long for Buttigieg, Klobuchar and Biden to put Warren on the defensive over the cost of her health care proposals.

Warren insisted that her proposal, which didn't eliminate private health insurance, will "lower costs for middle-class families." She plans to pay for the expensive new program with a "wealth tax" on the nation's richest families but has not provided details.

That prompted Buttigieg to contend her answer showed "why people here in the Midwest are so frustrated with Washington in general and Capitol Hill in particular." He said, "No plan has been laid out to explain how a multitrillion-dollar hole in the 'Medicare for all' plan that Sen. Warren is putting forward is supposed to get done."

Klobuchar noted Sanders conceded wealth taxes will go up for his Medicare plan and criticized Warren for failing to acknowledge she would be "kicking" 149 million people off private insurance. "I think we owe it to the American people to tell them where we're going to send the invoice," she said.

"It's awfully important to be straightforward" with the American people, Biden agreed, contending Warren's proposal would cost \$30 trillion over 10 years — a characterization she rejects. "That is more a yearly basis than the entire federal

budget."

The candidates displayed their broadest philosophical differences when CNN moderator Anderson Cooper asked why their approaches would attract the votes to defeat Trump.

"We all have good ideas," Biden said. "The question is: Who is going to be able to get it done?" He listed his record in passing the Violence Against Women Act, the Affordable Care Act and the assault weapons ban.

"You know what you also got done," Sanders said saltily. "You got the disastrous war in Iraq done. You got a bankruptcy bill, which is hurting middle class families all over the country."

He argued the public favors his more expansive program — in fact, a questionable thesis — and declared, "The way you win an election in this time in history is not the same old, same old."

Warren said her experience in enacting the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau would help her succeed. "I know what we can do by executive order and I will use it," she said. "In Congress, on the first day, I will pass my anti-corruption bill ... and repeat it a filibuster," two promises that may, in fact, prove difficult to achieve.

Buttigieg sought to bridge the divide, calling their rival arguments a "false choice" and urging viewers to think of "the day after Trump has stopped being president" when a new president could "unify a new American majority" to achieve progress.

A pre-debate Quinnipiac University poll showed Democrats favored Warren by a small margin and felt she had the best policy ideas but believed Biden was the best leader and could best defeat Trump. That, after all, is the idea.

Carl P. Leubsdorf is a former Washington bureau chief of The Dallas Morning News.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other state-side syndicates.

Mutual understanding among police, community still the goal *The Dallas Morning News*

There are moments that mark not just turning points in history, but points where it is evident that leaders must step forward and do the work to change the course of history.

The murder charge against former Fort Worth, Texas, police officer Aaron Dean, who last weekend shot and killed Atatiana Jefferson in her home, is one of these moments. The charge Dean now faces is what the facts, as they are known, appear to demand. Our community as a whole must see this as a crucial moment.

We don't pretend to know how this case will play out. Dean will now face a fair trial. And there will likely be twists and turns yet to come as we, as a community, come to grips with this tragedy and before the final chapter of this story is written.

Part of that story now is, according to the police, Jefferson may have pulled a pistol from her purse as she determined what was happening in her backyard. This is Texas, after all, where a person has a right to self-defense, especially at home, and why many people are still asking why the officer didn't knock on the front door and make himself known before entering the backyard.

But what we do know is that for the third time in two years, our region has seen a police officer charged with murder in the slaying of an innocent African American resident. All were incidents involving officers in different departments. And each victim was very different than the other two. One, Jordan Edwards, was a 15-year-old honor student at a high school party. Another, Botham Jean, was a 26-year-old accountant and immigrant in his own apartment. And now, Jefferson, 28, a woman sitting in her house playing video games with her nephew and caring for an ailing parent.

All of these people are now names in tragic stories.

There are other stories that also need to be part of our narrative. Although it is still within living memory, we are no longer in a period when the sanction of law perpetuated violence against racial minorities. Over the past several decades, laws have changed and many hearts have changed, too. Casting aspersions on all police officers based on the actions of a few is not only unfair, it is also damaging to us. Our assessment of police officers needs to be based in reality, and that reality is that there are millions of unseen actions that reflect the honor, integrity and respect our officers bring to work every day. Losing sight of that will make it harder for the men and women in blue to patrol our streets, to reduce crime, to keep us safe.

That doesn't erase the fact, of course, that innocent African Americans have been killed under circumstances that demand both justice and change. The depth of the damage to our society with each death necessitates clear, compelling and public responses. Three deaths in our area is more than enough to compel such a conversation in North Texas.

We fully expect that each of these cases will now be woven into training at police academies and for more experienced officers. We also expect leaders within our communities to step into the fray with reasoned responses driven toward viable solutions. To unfairly castigate officers is to undermine our community in profound,



if often invisible, ways. Doing so destroys the trust that is crucially important for a department to police a city, and it frays the bonds that enable officers to be connected to the community. Those bonds help residents better understand the role of police officers, and they help police officers better understand and stay in tune with concerns and issues facing the community.

If this sounds like we believe in that, in the aftermath of these shootings we should find ways to be better connected to our police departments, it is because that is what we are calling for. We are also calling for police departments to demand reforms absorb the concerns of the community and take steps to reinforce the kind of culture and practices that can prevent these shootings. It is possible to prevent these shootings. It is possible to build trust. But with each shooting, the hard task of doing such work falls farther out of reach.

Utility companies proactive, but power outages disruptive *Los Angeles Times*

Last year, state officials changed the law to allow power companies to be more aggressive shutting down electrical lines in areas where strong, dry winds were predicted so that even if they were downed, they wouldn't spark a fire. The idea was that the outages would be used only as a last resort and that, ultimately, a little bit of pain and inconvenience was worth avoiding another deadly wildfire. Nearly all the deadliest fires over the last 20 years have been blamed on electrical lines and equipment.

The state's two largest utilities — Pacific Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison — employed that preventive move in a big way last week, plunging millions of people into the dark, bungling communications with the public and prompting questions about whether the weather in the end had justified such an extreme reaction. The PG&E shutdowns were staggeringly broad in scope. All this by a company that has lagged badly on its tree-trimming efforts and other fire safety programs.

Now that the winds have died down, state officials should hold utility executives to account for answers. Gov. Gavin Newsom on Monday asked the Public Utilities Commission to undertake an immediate review of PG&E's outage of 738,000 customers. And it should do so, ideally, before the Santa Ana and Diablo winds return.

The review should include Edison's outages as well. Edison was much less aggressive, shutting down power to only 24,113 customers at the peak, but the outages were still disruptive.

Among the questions that need answering is why the power was cut to some communities and not others. We know that shutting down power lines has ripple effects, but without explanation, the outages feel random. Also, why were the utilities not

better prepared to communicate with customers about what was coming? Edison and PG&E had been working with the PUC for more than a year to hammer out rules governing "public safety power shutdowns." Yet last week, both had website problems when customers logged on to find out if they were on the outage list. Honestly, these two utilities collectively serve most of California. How could they not have foreseen this demand for information?

But the most important question to be answered is whether the outages accomplished anything. PG&E's equipment didn't start any fires last week, but that might have been the case even if the lights had stayed on. Millions of thousands of Southern Californians had their power cut, but the power continued to flow through lines at the ignition point of the Saddleridge fire near Sylmar. It's still too early to say if those live wires caused the fire, but Edison reported that they were malfunctioning.

Newsom has called on PG&E to offer a \$100 credit to residential customers and \$250 to businesses left in the dark last week. That's a nice gesture, but we think it would be even better if people could feel confident that the pre-emptive blackouts were actually making people safer.

Trump not even achieving his goals with GI pullout in Syria *The Washington Post*

Until now, it was possible to hope that the damage caused by President Donald Trump's terrible incompetence, ignorance and impulsivity in foreign policy was largely theoretical, and possibly repairable. That is no longer true. The cost of his latest Syria blunder is unfolding before our eyes: Innocent lives lost, U.S. servicemen betrayed. Butchered dictators emboldened. Dangerous terrorists set free. A ghastly scene is playing out, and it almost surely will get worse.

How often have Trump and his Republican enablers in Congress berated President Barack Obama for allowing Syria to cross his "red line" without dire consequences? None of them is entitled ever to mention that again.

Trump — with no consideration, no warning, no consultation with allies, no regard for the other nations that have fought alongside the United States and risked their men and women in the fight — has turned tail. In the past two years, courageous U.S. troops cooperated with our Kurdish allies to defeat the deadly Islamic State caliphate. These allies lost more than 11,000 men and women; the United States, a dozen. It was a rare U.S. success in the Middle East.

The president has thrown it all away. His surrender is so hasty that U.S. forces could not execute a longstanding plan to take dozens of high-profile ISIS detainees with them. ISIS is likely to exert its malign force again. The allies who fought along-

side us are being slaughtered, and non-combatant women and children, too. Iran is strengthened, which threatens Israel. The murderous Syrian dictator Bashar Assad is strengthened too. Russia is taking charge. America's adversaries could not have scripted a better outcome.

Trump likes to preen and posture as a champion of American fighters. But what more bitter medicine could any commander-in-chief administer to U.S. troops than ordering them to abandon the comrades who fought alongside them? He likes to preen, too, as a great enemy of Iran, and even as he runs from Syria he is ordering 1,800 U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to deter Iran. But that deployment, while proving the utter incoherence of his claim of "ending wars in the Middle East," will have far less effect on Iran than the U.S. pullout from Syria, which opens the door for it to swell its influence there, on Israel's borders.

And speaking of preening: Republican senators such as Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina, and Marco Rubio, of Florida, who have cheered on Donald Trump and his national security team, now huff and puff about imposing sanctions on Turkey as punishment for its invasion. Trump announced such sanctions Tuesday. But only one week ago he highlighted Turkey's invasion, and on Sunday he further encouraged it with his announcement of a hasty U.S. withdrawal. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan bears responsibility for Turkey's deprivations, of course. But if there is any coherence — or morality — in Trump's position, he is doing a good job of concealing it.

US, China see the benefits in pursuing a trade deal true *The Wall Street Journal*

President Donald Trump last Friday announced a trade deal with China that he called "tremendous" or "tremendously" positive 15 times. The details look far more modest to us, but this truce in the trade war beats the alternative of escalating tariffs that have already caused a significant global economic slowdown.

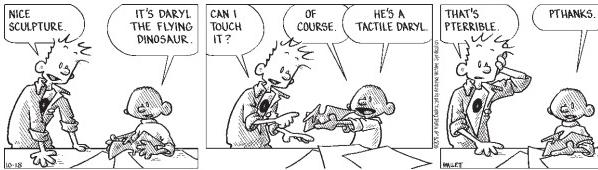
Trump said China will make some \$40 billion to \$50 billion more in agricultural purchases over two years and has promised to better protect intellectual property and welcome more foreign financial services. In return the U.S. won't increase tariffs to 30% from 25% on \$250 billion of Chinese goods this week as Trump had planned. The two countries also agreed to keep talking toward what Trump called a "phase two" agreement that would include the tougher issues such as Chinese technology theft and predatory regulation against American companies. There will also be a new consultation process to address disputes and monitor enforcement. The implication is that if progress continues, Trump will cancel the tariffs planned for December on more Chinese goods.

In essence both sides sued for a temporary peace to forestall further economic damage. China avoids a tariff escalation that has been hurting its exports and induced Beijing to impose capital controls to avoid capital flight and a run on the Chinese yuan. Trump gets election-year farm purchases that will alleviate the harm his tariff war has done to American farmers. Equity markets should be relieved, and higher stock prices would buoy fading consumer confidence.

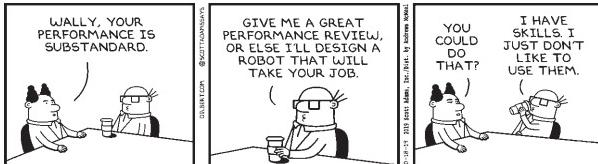
None of this amounts to the kind of grand deal that would fundamentally shift China's relationship to the world trading system. President Xi Jinping will still be able to avoid the hard decisions that would require him to reform state-owned industries or rein in the thieves at the ministry of security.

Trump deserves credit for challenging China's abusive practices, but he'd be in a stronger negotiating position had his tariffs not do so much to weaken the U.S. economy.

Frazz



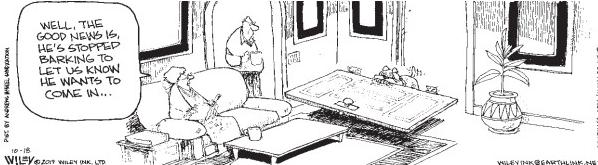
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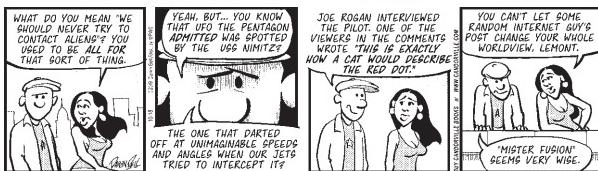
Pearls Before Swine



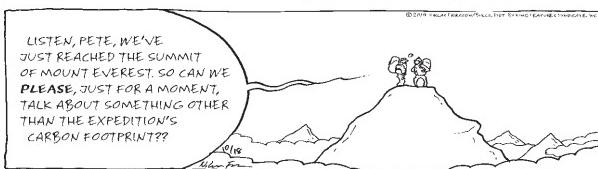
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



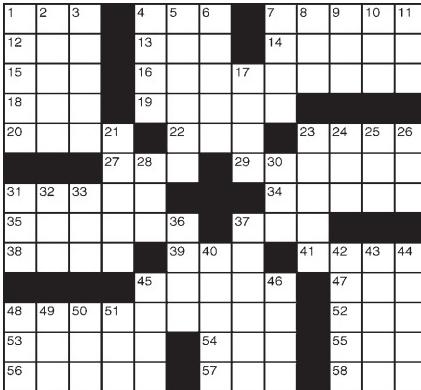
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 57 Objectivist Rand
58 Compass dir.
28 "Exodus" hero
30 "Alley"—
31 — who?"
32 Calendar abbr.
33 Play segment
36 Entryway
37 Fitzgerald title character
40 Actress Linney
42 Dental exam pictures
43 Continental cash
44 Musical transition
45 Some corp. recruits
46 Tibia's place
48 "So there!" address
49 GI's address
50 Connections
51 Pensioned (Abbr.)

Answer to Previous Puzzle

B	E	A	S	U	E	R	P	O	P	E
O	R	G	E	L	L	I	M	O	N	
A	G	E	M	A	T	E	N	E	D	
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G	E	N	E	S	I	S	V	W	I	D
U	S	E	R	O	P	E	D	P	A	G
A	T	A	N	N	O	M	E	G	U	T
M	O	P	I	S	T	I	R	E	Y	E

10-18

CRYPTOQUIP

PT AUZR MV RD KJ GV RR N SBH
AMRUQ UORUQ GT HPDR, HORV
DB NH AR NB MR HG DU ZR
KM RN JP SR DR UN BMR DR XHN.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE POPULAR CAR RENTAL COMPANY HAS BECOME SO SIZABLE THAT THEY OUGHT TO RENAME IT "MEGAHERTZ."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals B

Frazz



Dilbert



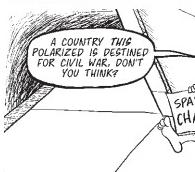
Pearls Before Swine



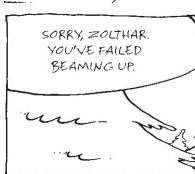
Non Sequitur



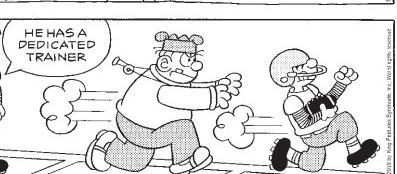
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro

**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13						14	
15			16						17	
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			36			37				
38	39	40			41		42	43	44	
45				46			47			
48				49			50			
51				52			53			

ACROSS**DOWN**

- 1 Pledge
 4 Compass point
 8 Tub session
 12 Kimono sash
 13 Crunchy cookie
 14 Theater award
 15 Affirmative action?
 16 Spoken
 17 Look after
 18 Obviously
 21 Flushed
 22 Prom rental
 23 Mortal
 26 Run for fun
 27 Pair
 30 Speedy steed
 31 Low isle
 32 Stinger
 33 Blend
 34 Lad
 35 Nibbles
 36 Center
 37 Small batteries
 38 Broadway's nickname
 45 Cracker name
 46 Sunrise direction
 47 Alias abbr.
 48 Farm unit
 49 Vitriol
 50 Big shot
 51 Sense
 52 Winter coaster
 53 USN rank

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	A	P	S	C	A	N	T			
N	I	A	L	O	H	U	L	A	S	
E	O	S	P	O	R	C	U	P	I	N
A	L	T	O	R	I	O	R	I	O	N
K	I	E	V	E	M	O	B	E	O	F
O	A	R	P	O	L	A	N	D		
S	T	A	I	R	O	A	T	E	R	
E	U	C	L	I	D	G	P	S		
Z	E	T	A	O	L	A	E	X	E	S
M	O	A	T	S						
H	A	I	R	B	U	R	S	H	A	G
A	P	N	E	A	R	B	I	Y	U	
H	O	S	T	S	A	Y	N		S	S

10-19

CRYPTOQUIP

IG XAN - FG XAN ONE A Z SG MW

YIIA KRM B OG QG WO YI PYI M LA

WP ML - Z Y WSML R E KG FC B OW :

Y W G Y E I A W W K G Q Y L O M B .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF BAKERY EMPLOYEES CUT BREAD AHEAD OF TIME, THEY MUST BE SURE TO MAKE PRESLICE MEASUREMENTS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals Y

The collage includes the following images:

- A red and blue X-Exchange logo.
- A lion cub toy.
- A white and orange NERF Ultra blaster.
- A Barbie doll in a red dress.
- The large Toy Holiday Shop logo.
- A blue train hanging from a hot air balloon.
- A red Elmo plush toy.
- A brown horse action figure with a saddle.
- A red circular graphic offering 0% interest and no payments for 6 months on purchases of \$199 or more with a military star.

NO SALES TAX!
Limited quantities. Selection may vary by location.

Sale dates: Friday, October 18 – Wednesday, November 27
More brands & more value at shopmyexchange.com.

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Circulation	Van Rowell rowell.van@stripes.com +49(0)631-3615,9111 DSN 314,583,9111
Reader Letters	letters@stripes.com

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For information on Commercial Rates: CIV: 0631-3615-9012 or DSN: 583-9012

Announcements 040**Automotive 140****Autos for Sale 141****Autos for Sale - UK 154****Electronic Shopping440****Furniture 510****Tools & Machinery 990****Free Classifieds!****SCAM FADS**

Classifieds scams can target both sellers and buyers with classifieds advertisements.

Be aware of the common red flags.

Some of the latest Scam facts are:

□ Vehicle buyers waiting to buy a car unseen and have the vehicle shipped through an agent using paypal.

□ People saying Free Dog (different breeds) for adoption.

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Individuals placing classified advertising should use discretion in concluding the sale of their property. Not all potential buyers are reputable or honest. Stars and Stripes suggests that you take precautions to ensure that potential buyers are reputable and will be able to fulfill the terms of the sale. Stars and Stripes is not liable for the contractual relationship between sellers and buyers of merchandise advertised in the newspaper or on the web site.

2008 Peugeot 807 Van (7 seat)
\$5,000.00 72,408 miles
11/15/2019

Newly Inspected. A good unit.
05 Sept. 2020. Manual Diesel

Transmission: 6 Speed
Sliding doors Email:
farve01@hotmail.co

2008 HONDA CR-V 86,651 miles
\$19,452km Inspection is
Spec. Manual Diesel With trailer
tow. Email: farve01@gmail.co

BMW X5 for sale \$19,000.00
BMW X5 for sale \$19,000.00
105,000 miles. All options, includ-
ing: xenon headlights, sunroof, side-
airbags, winter, curtains and
cooler, maintenance, garage car.
Min. bid \$10,000.00
Est. call: +49-162-977110
Email: gordon@hbm.com

AUTO PARTS 180

Winter tires & wheels for VW
Golf GTI 3M72 - \$350.00
Winter tires & wheels for 2015
VW Passat 2.0 TDI 140PS 17000 KM
MKS wob7549@gmail.com

COLLECTIBLES 350

African Ebony Letter Openers
and Fertility Dolls - \$30.00
each. African Ebony Letter Openers
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POOL TABLE FOR SALE
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Auto Parts 180**Contractor Tools 142****Collectibles 350****Furniture 510****Mirror 10****PCs Sale 780****Burleigh Ware Tea Set 30****Bodum Coffee Press 4 Trays 6****Bodum Chambord 1L 6****Burleigh Ware Tea Set 10 piece****Burleigh Ware Tea Set 10 piece**



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Deals

Wednesday's transactions

BALLPARK

USA BASEBALL — Announced the re-signation of Scott Johnson, manager of the team, named Scott Brosius manager.

American League

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Signed Joe Maddon manager and agreed to terms with him on a three-year contract.

National League

CINCINNATI REDS — Designated C Juan Graterol for assignment. Claimed LHP Josh Smith off waivers from Miami.

BASKETBALL

NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION — **LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS** — Signed B.J. Taylor to a one-year contract.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES

— Signed G Matt Milano (hamstring), CB Robert Foster (groin), CB Taron Johnson (hamstring), F Donte Greene (knee), F Morgan (ankle), DENT TRENT Murphy (concussion), RB Devin Stillman (hamstring).

WASHINGTON WIZARDS

— Waived F Justin Anderson and Jemere Jones and D Tony Pashos. Designated F Jalen Jones and C Arzeis Pasenikas.

Women's NBA

NEW YORK LIBERTY — Announced the contract of coach Katie Smith will not be renewed.

FOOTBALL

National Football League — **ATLANTA FALCONS** — Waived/injured P Matt Schaub (knee) and LOJ Wetzell. Signed TE Carson Meier to the practice squad.

CAROLINA PANTHERS

— Signed WR Greg Dortch.

DALLAS COWBOYS

— Placed DL Tyronne Crawford on IR. Signed DJ Justin.

DETROIT LIONS

— Signed WR Tom Kennedy to the practice squad.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

— Released TE Darren Fells. Released TE Ryan Tannehill. Signed CB Terrence Smith to the practice squad.

LOS ANGELES RAMS

— Placed OL Joe Noteboom to the practice squad.

MIAMI DOLPHINS

— Claimed CB Ryan Lewis off waivers from Philadelphia.

VIKINGS

— Signed DE Tashawn Bowe.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

— Signed RB Terrance Parker. Released S Stephen Anthony.

OAKLAND RAIDERS

— Released DE Quinton Bell. Signed DE Kendall Doolittle to the practice squad. Signed TE Darron Waller to a multi-year contract extension.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

— Released LB Malik Carney and CB Parry Nickerson from the practice squad. Signed CB Brian Hartline (concussion), WR Tyree Swoopes and OT Chad Wheeler to the practice squad.

ST. LOUIS BUCCANEERS

— Waived LB Devante Bond and WR Bobo Wilson. Released RB Darious Jackson and LB Demone Washington to the practice squad.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

— Signed RB Josh Ferguson to the practice squad.

College basketball

Women's Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' preseason 2018-19 women's college basketball poll, with first-place votes, second-place votes and third-place votes, total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote and last's year ranking:

	Record	Pts	Pvs
1. Baylor (28)	35-3	665	8
2. UConn	35-3	665	8
3. Notre Dame	35-4	648	3
4. Mississippi St.	35-3	647	5
5. Louisville	32-4	579	5
6. Stanford	31-5	568	6
7. Oregon	30-6	565	6
8. Iowa	29-7	509	8
9. Maryland	29-5	455	9
10. NC State	28-6	450	10
11. Oregon St.	28-6	448	10
12. Syracuse	25-9	324	15
13. Florida	26-8	311	17
14. Texas A&M	26-8	301	17
15. South Carolina	23-10	291	16
16. Georgia	25-8	281	16
17. Kentucky	25-8	261	18
18. Marquette	27-8	259	13
19. Michigan	22-13	131	20
20. UCLA	28-4	103	24
21. Rice	22-11	100	23
22. Arizona St.	23-0	100	23
23. Texas	24-5	97	23
24. DePaul	26-8	75	25
25. Pitt	24-9	67	25

Other receiving votes: Duke (54), South Dakota St., BYU, 25; MU, 19; South Dakota, 14; Florida Gulf Coast, 14; Kent St., UC, 3; Quinnipiac, 1; Wright St., 1.

Record = Wins-Losses-Ties. **Pts** = Points. **Pvs** = Polling votes.

Ranking = Total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote and last's year ranking.

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NHL

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

	Atlantic Division						GP	G	Pts	OT	GF	GA
	G	P	L	OT	W	Loss						
Buffalo	7	5	1	0	11	27	18					
Boston	6	5	1	0	10	16	10					
Toronto	6	5	1	0	10	16	10					
Tampa Bay	6	3	3	2	1	7	23	18				
Detroit	6	3	3	2	1	6	17	21				
Montreal	6	3	3	2	1	6	16	21				
Florida	6	2	2	2	2	6	19	24				
Ottawa	5	1	4	0	0	11	9					
Metropolitan Division												
Carolina	8	6	2	0	12	28	21					
Pittsburgh	7	5	2	0	10	24	15					
Washington	6	5	2	0	10	16	10					
N.Y. Islanders	6	3	3	2	0	6	15	17				
Columbus	6	3	3	2	0	6	14	20				
Philadelphia	6	2	4	0	0	5	13	19				
N.Y. Rangers	3	2	1	4	0	4	11	9				
New Jersey	6	0	4	2	2	13	29					

Western Conference

	Central Division						GP	G	Pts	OT	GF	GA
	G	P	L	OT	W	Loss						
Colorado	6	5	1	0	10	11	18					
Nashville	6	5	1	0	10	11	18					
St. Louis	6	3	1	2	8	9	20					
Winnipeg	8	4	4	0	8	26	30					
Chicago	8	4	4	0	8	26	30					
Dallas	8	1	6	0	1	2	15	26				
Minnesota	6	1	6	0	1	2	14	25				

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division qualify for the conference advance to playoffs.

Wednesday's games

Columbus at Pittsburgh
N.Y. Rangers at New Jersey
Vancouver at St. Louis
N.Y. Islanders at Winnipeg
Edmonton at Philadelphia
Anaheim at Colorado
San Jose, Carolina 2
Thursday's games

Tampa Bay at Boston

Minnesota at Montreal

N.J. Devils at New Jersey

Vancouver at St. Louis

N.Y. Islanders at Winnipeg

Edmonton at Philadelphia

Nashville at Arizona

Ottawa at Vegas

Buffalo at Los Angeles

Fridays' games

Dallas at Pittsburgh

N.Y. Rangers at Washington

Colorado at Florida

Colorado at Chicago

Detroit at Edmonton

Carolina at Anaheim

Saturdays' games

Vancouver at New Jersey

Montreal at St. Louis

Washington at Pittsburgh

N.Y. Islanders at Columbus

Colorado at Tampa Bay

Edmonton at St. Louis

Ottawa at Arizona

Dallas at Philadelphia

Hurricanes at Buffalo

Calgary at Los Angeles

Buffalo at San Jose

Sundays' games

N.Y. Rangers at Vancouver

Montreal at Minnesota

Washington at Chicago

Edmonton at Winnipeg

Calgary at Anaheim

Scoring Leaders

Through Wednesday

GP	G	A	Pts
Connor McDavid, EDM	7	6	13
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	7	6	13
John Carlson, WAS	8	3	11
Mark Scheifele, CGY	8	5	13
Sidney Crosby, PIT	7	4	8
Patrik Laine, WPG	8	3	9
David Pastrnak, BOS	7	4	8
Mark Stone, VEG	7	5	10
Jack Eichel, BUF	7	4	8
Mikko Rantanen, COL	6	4	10

Edmonton Oilers center Connor McDavid led the league with 17 points through Wednesday's games.

JASON FRANSON, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Around the league

Rookie rivals struggling

Devils' Hughes, Rangers' Kakko set to face off for first time

BY VIN A. CHERWOO
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jack Hughes and Kaapo Kakko were the clear favorites all along to be the top two picks in this year's NHL draft. So far, the 18-year-olds have struggled to generate a lot of offense in the opening weeks of the season.

Kakko, selected second by the New York Rangers after New Jersey took Hughes at No. 1, broke through with his first NHL goal on Saturday. Hughes nearly got his first on Monday.

The two youngsters got a close-up look at each other on Thursday night when the Rangers visited the Devils for the metropolitan-area teams' first matchup of the season.

Despite Hughes' struggles getting on the scoresheet, Devils coach John Hynes likes the way the teenager is learning and working on improving his game.

"He's really understanding how hard you need to compete in this game and how much puck battles matter, attention to detail when you don't have the puck, and he's making strides in those areas," Hynes said. "He's just a step away from really creating some pretty good offense."

Half of Famer Wayne Gretzky, now part of the Oilers' front office, cautioned about the high expectations immediately placed on young players who come into the league as top draft picks. He pointed to Edmonton star Connor McDavid, who was a No. 1 pick in 2015.

"It's harder than people think," Gretzky said. "There's a little bit more pressure on these young guys than people think. Connor's been in the league a few years, he's lived up to it ... Young Hughes is going to be a fine hockey player. I've watched him play quite a bit. He's 18 years old, he's in the right situation."

"It's just going to take him some time, he's going to get his feet wet, he's going to get some growing pains but all in all, you can tell his skill level and his passion for the game."

Gretzky also talked about the adjustments Hughes has to make as he adapts to the professional game and the higher level of competition.

"Now you're playing against men, you're playing against the best players in the world," he said. "Let's be honest, we had fun and we were pretty good, but these kids today with the level of skill and size and speed, they're so much better than when we played. That's not a knock against us. That means the game is growing and getting better all the time."

With the Devils leading the Panthers 4-2 on Monday, Hughes



New York Rangers right wing Kaapo Kakko (24) celebrates after scoring his first career goal against the Edmonton Oilers Saturday at Madison Square Garden in New York.

had a chance to add to the lead. He got a bouncing puck on the left side of the goal, and batted it off the post and over the stick of goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, who was diving back, but the puck went along the goal line and hit the right post and stayed out.

Hughes, who had three goals and an assist in four preseason games, remained without a point in the regular season and New Jersey ended up squandering a three-goal lead in a 6-4 loss to Florida to 0-4-2.

Two days earlier, Kakko got on the scoreboard with a nifty forehand-to-backhand move to give



New Jersey Devils rookie center Jack Hughes, right, was the No. 1 overall draft choice this year.

the Rangers an early lead in a 4-1 loss to Edmonton. New York's first loss after opening the season with two wins.

"It was a special way for him to score," said linemate Ryan Strome, who set up Kakko on the rush. "A great goal, a great move. Hopefully the floodgates are open for him. He's got all the tools to do it, so it should be fun to watch."

Rookies who have already stood out in the opening weeks of the season:

■ **Victor Olafsson, RW, Buffalo.** The 24-year-old has five goals and two assists in six games and set an NHL record with his first

seven goals all coming on the power play. He had two goals and two assists in six games last season. His record-setting goal got the Sabres started in a 4-0 win against Dallas on Monday that improved Buffalo to 5-0-1.

■ **Cale Makar, D, Colorado.** Selected No. 4 overall by the Avalanche in the 2017 draft, he has six assists in five games, with four coming on power-play goals. Makar, who will turn 21 on Oct. 30, has helped the Avalanche open the season with five wins for the franchise's best start since beginning with six wins in 2014-15.

■ **Sam Lafferty, C, Pittsburgh.** With the Penguins missing forwards Evgeni Malkin, Nick Bjugstad, Alex Galchenyuk and Bryan Rust, Lafferty has stepped up with three goals and two assists — all coming in the last two games, road wins against Minnesota and Winnipeg — to help push Pittsburgh to 4-2-0.

■ **Ilya Mikheyev, RW, Toronto.** The 25-year-old Russian, signed as a free agent in May, has two goals and three assists in seven games. Mikheyev had a sensational goal Saturday night against Detroit as he drew Jimmy Howard out far from the crease, went to his left and fired it wide-open goal.

■ **Ilya Samsonov, G, Washington.** After coming over from the KHL, Samsonov spent last season with Hershey of the AHL. As Braden Holtby's backup, the 22-year-old won his first two starts, limiting the Islanders and Stars to one goal each with a .961 save percentage. In relief duty against Colorado on Monday, he gave up two goals on 21 shots and took his first loss.

NBA

Referees to crack down on traveling

Officials say removal of hand-checking has resulted in 'almost unguardable' players

By BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — James Harden slides sideways or steps backward, and the screaming starts.

Whether seated on the opposing bench or on a stool in a sports bar, somebody is insisting that Harden must have traveled between the time he finished dribbling and launched his shot from a different spot. Traveling will be an emphasis this season for officials, who are determined not to allow offensive players to gain an extra edge by taking an extra step.

Scoring stars like Harden already got an advantage once hand-checking on the perimeter was no longer legal, so they can't be given another one.

"If we can't allow people to hand check, we can't allow them to travel because then they're almost unguardable," vice president of referee operations Mark Wunderlich said.

That said, most times when Harden does his signature step-back, he doesn't travel.

"It is legal, except for the fact that he gets a third step in every now and then when his rhythm is just off, which shows you the highlight of how difficult it is," said Monty McCutchen, the NBA's head of referee development and training.

That's why referees are working harder to get it right.

Critics of the NBA — and even some fans — have long sneered that the league doesn't call traveling. McCutchen said data showed officials were missing about two per game, but the way the game is played today can make those misses more punitive for the defense.

Players are bigger, faster and more skilled, and even big men who would have been centers in a previous generation are now doing everything forwards like 6-foot-11 MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo. He already gets far enough with the two steps that are legal, forget when allowed a third.

McCutchen compared the difference with Tiny Archibald, a 6-foot guard who played in the 1970s and '80s.

"He covered 10 feet with his two steps," McCutchen said. "How far is Giannis covering? The game has changed."

So officials have begun to change with it, altering the way they were taught to officiate when McCutchen and Wunderlich were on the floor. Before, referees were trained to look first at the defensive player. Now they have reversed their sequencing, looking first at the offensive player's feet to make certain a legal pivot

foot has been established and not changed.

And the league added new language in the rule book to define the "gather" to clarify how many steps a player can take after receiving the ball or completing his dribble.

At the referees' preseason meetings and training camp last week, McCutchen said officials studied replays of three travels each time they returned from a break, and had a dedicated 45-minute session on traveling.

An educational video was sent to teams, and the referees visited the coaches' preseasoon meetings, where they had a traveling station with two players on the floor so they could do demonstrations for the coaches.

And Houston coach Mike D'Antoni said the league stressed that Harden's step-back jumper is legal.

"They made a point, which is great, to tell every head coach that is not traveling. It's not traveling," D'Antoni said. "So hopefully coaches will quit complaining and hopefully you guys in the news will understand that's not traveling. There's other points that we have to clean up so that are traveling and the NBA is going to try to do a better job of that."

San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich quipped last year that the step-back three came when players "jump backwards and travel and shoot a three." But the leaders of the referee team praised Harden for his cleverness and creativity.

"On the dribble, we always talk about dribbling you can take two legal steps to the basket, right? No one ever thought about on the gather after you dribble you can take two legal steps backwards," Wunderlich said.

Harden said it never should have been a debate, because if he was traveling, referees would have been whistling him for it.

"I'm tired of hearing that's a

travel, from coaches, from other

players, from haters, fans, what-

ever you want to call it," Harden said.

But he acknowledges it looks awkward, so the referees know they have to educate teams and fans just as much as themselves. There is no new rule or even a new interpretation of traveling, just a desire to correctly call the travels that are in the books.

That's why it's the biggest emphasis in the preseasoon list of points of education.



MICHAEL WYKE/AP

The Houston Rockets' Russell Westbrook and James Harden, right, are photographed together during media day in Houston. Teams who longed to build a Big Three are now striving for a dynamic duo, hoping two premier players can win a championship when the belief used to be that it required a trio.

Two: Big Three era appears to be over

FROM FRONT PAGE

teams, so now this is a new dynamic for the new generation of this league."

One that could make the NBA more balanced and exciting this season. If one team boards too many good players, as Golden State did while reaching the last five NBA Finals, it leaves a lengthy list of clubs who have no realistic hope of contending for a title.

But if it only takes a pair of All-Star players, that opens the door for teams who already have two, or have one and the assets to get another.

The Big Three model kept some of those teams from going all in, but that era appears over.

"I think that's the way the league just went," Davis said. "I'm not sure if it was done purposefully, but I think this is maybe the most exciting the league ever has been in a while. It's going to be fun."

James won rings with two versions of a Big Three, teaming with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh for back-to-back titles in Miami, and then rallying Cleveland to the 2016 championship along with Irving and Kevin Love. Now he'll try to do it with one fewer, which might be enough if the Lakers put the right pieces around him and Davis, who are two of the top players in the league.

So are Leonard and George. Doc Rivers coached a Big Three to the 2008 title in Boston with Kevin Garnett, Paul Pierce and Ray Allen, and the Celtics might've won another if not for the Heat building a younger one two years later.

Now he'll try to win with two, with a Clippers team that George thinks looks like many other teams in today's NBA.

"I think what Boston did was special. I think what Miami did was special," he said. "But I think



JEFF CHIU/AP

The Los Angeles Lakers have paired LeBron James, left, with Anthony Davis in hopes that the All-Star duo can lead the Lakers back to the playoffs—and beyond.

it goes back to you have two guys that are the guys and then you have a group around them that supports them to the highest level, and that foundation is around a lot of guys in this league."

Though the focus has been on the tandem of two, George said a number of teams could point to a complementary player and say they have a Big Three. Houston is one of them, coach Mike D'Antoni said when asked the reason for the trend.

"A lot of it is media-driven in the sense of we've got Eric Gordon. He's a superstar," D'Antoni said. "Eric Gordon's as good as anybody in the league. So you focus on, 'Oh, we've only got two,' because that's the named two. But probably money and cap does create an equal system for everybody."

Trying to afford three top players and keep them for long became even more challenging only a year after James and Bosh went to Miami, with the 2011 Collective Bargaining Agreement im-

plementing severe penalties for teams who exceed the luxury tax. Short of players sacrificing salary, as Tim Duncan repeatedly did in San Antonio when the Spurs kept him, Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili together long enough to win four titles, it's almost impossible to get three stars and a competent cast around them.

Even if the salaries work, the personalities might not. It's hard to keep three alpha dogs happy, as Irving showed by asking out of Cleveland, especially because one of them usually has to give up so much of his game so three isn't a crowd.

"You have a guy that's used to being a focal point of the offense — take Bron's teams in Miami," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "There's more sacrifice I think probably to be had if it's a Big Three versus a Big Two, but that would be my two cents on it."

And his two cents on the two-man trend?

"I think we've got the best of them, of all the duos," he said.

NBA

Sophomore class has no shortage of stars

BY DAVID BRANDT

Associated Press

Deandre Ayton strolled around the practice court, talking and laughing with coaches and teammates following a two-hour workout with the Phoenix Suns.

It is clear he is comfortable operating in lofty surroundings, even on a morning in the mountains of Flagstaff, despite a sign on the wall that warned of the dangers of physical exertion at 7,000 feet of altitude.

"What's that, 7,000? Nah, I need more like 15. That was pretty light," Ayton quipped. "I don't have that little chest burn feeling when you're at such a high altitude. It was fun."

So is winning. And the expectations are high for the former No. 1 draft pick, who is part of a promising 2018 NBA Draft class that teams are looking at becoming the faces of rebuilding franchises.

Dallas guard Luka Doncic was the rookie of the year after averaging 21.2 points, 7.8 rebounds and six assists per game. Atlanta's Trae Young finished second in the voting, averaging 19.1 points and 8.1 assists. Ayton was third.

"This summer, I've never worked so hard in a gym before in my life," said the 21-year-old Ayton, who averaged 16.3 points and 10.3 rebounds. "I've seen these lines so many times, I see them in regular life now. They beat me to the ground this summer."

First-year Suns coach Monty Williams said Ayton's development isn't as much about his physical skills because those have been evident all along. He said the guys who develop into great players are the ones who recognize the sweat equity involved.

"They realize early in their first year that it takes a lot of work to be good, so their work ethic goes up that summer," Williams said. "You see more consistent work from guys and a different mentality in the weight room. They take coaching a lot better because they know more stuff."



RICHARD W. RODRIGUEZ/AP

Mavericks forward Luka Doncic is just 20 years old but has wowed the league with his combination of shooting, passing and knock for producing in clutch moments. Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle expects improvement from Doncic in year two, but "the dynamics of the stats are going to be way different," because the players around him are better.

A look at some of the top second-year players on the NBA:

Doncic, Dallas Mavericks: The 6-foot-7 Doncic wowed the NBA with his combination of shooting, passing and knock for producing in clutch moments. And he's just 20 years old.

Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle expects improvement from Doncic in year two, but it might look a little different than others are expecting.

"He's playing with more players and more better players," Carlisle said. "And he's playing with another star-caliber

player with (Kristaps) Porzingis. The dynamics of the stats are going to be way different. I don't know what the whole thing's going to look like."

Young, Atlanta Hawks: The 6-2 guard got off to a slow start as a rookie, which led to plenty of talk that the draft day Doncic-for-Young swap was going to end up heavily in favor of the Mavericks.

But Young bounced back with an encouraging second half. He averaged more than 23 points and nine assists over his final 31 games.

"I know it's going to be even tougher

this year, but that's something you work on during the summer and something I knew I needed to be even more prepared for," Young said.

Marvin Bagley III, Sacramento Kings: The 6-11 Bagley was much like Young in that he pushed through an up-and-down first half of the season before finishing with an impressive second half.

The No. 2 pick averaged about 18 points and nine rebounds over the season's final two months despite coming off the bench in most games. He made the All-Rookie team along with Doncic, Ayton, Young and Memphis' Jaren Jackson.

The Kings showed some promise last season with a young core that includes Bagley and De'Aaron Fox and Buddy Hield.

"Not making the playoffs was something I thought about all summer," Bagley said. "I just had that in the back of my mind that we still gotta get to the playoffs and show everybody what we can do."

Jaren Jackson Jr., Memphis Grizzlies: Last year's No. 4 pick showed plenty of potential, averaging 13.8 points and 4.7 rebounds over 58 games despite missing time with a quadriplegia injury. The 6-11 forward just turned 20.

He'll team with this year's No. 2 overall pick, Ja Morant, on a remake Memphis roster.

"You can't be predictable, you've got to grow and find other ways to get to the basket," Jackson said. "I know a lot of the ways I scored before aren't always going to work just because people get better and scout better."

Collin Sexton, Cleveland Cavaliers: Sexton was a bright spot on a bad Cavaliers team. The 6-2 guard, the No. 8 pick, averaged 16.7 points and three assists per game.

He said he spent the offseason watching hours of film and getting stronger in the weight room.

"I felt like I needed to be stronger to finish at the rim a lot better," Sexton said. "And I want to be able to fight over screens, instead of getting hit on them."



TAMI CHAPPELL/AP

Hawks guard Trae Young, left, is defended by Orlando Magic center Mo Bamba last week in Atlanta. Young was runner-up last season to Dallas' Luka Doncic for Rookie of the Year, averaging 19.1 points and 8.1 assists.



MATT KNUDSEN/AP

Nuggets center Deandre Ayton works in the post against Denver Nuggets forward Torrey Craig on Monday in Phoenix. The 21-year-old Ayton averaged 16.3 points and 10.3 rebounds last season, finishing third in Rookie of the Year voting.

HIGH SCHOOL

Zama girls enter YUJO on big run

Trojans have beaten every DODEA team on their schedule

BY DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — A year ago, Zama entered the American School In Japan YUJO volleyball tournament simply to gain experience.

It became a launch pad for the Trojans, who went on to win the DODEA Japan tournament later that October and came in second in the Far East Division II Tournament.

This weekend, the Trojans are back in the 5th edition of the YUJO tournament. And junior hitter Grace Bryant says Zama is in it to win it this time.

"This year, we would like to win and do our best," said Bryant, the Most Valuable Player in last year's D-II Tournament at Humphreys. "We have good individual talent for every position. I think we're pretty strong this year."

The Trojans added a handful of contributors to go with their already solid returning core.

Gabrielle Griffiths joined the team at the season's beginning and has proved her worth as a middle blocker. Freshman Nina Sakamoto-Flack is chipping in as an outside hitter. Setters Iris Hirata and Jazlyn Rioux are filling the shoes of Kate Holtquist, who transferred after last school year.

The Trojans have beaten every DODEA team they've played and only lost two matches to Division I international schools this season.

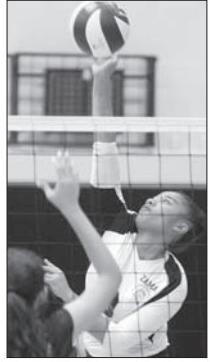
This year's YUJO fields a tournament-record 16 teams, including one from China (Shanghai American Puxi), Hong Kong (Harrow International School) and Singapore (United World College of Southeast Asia). A record seven DODEA teams are entered, including Humphreys for the first time.

Defending YUJO and Far East Division I champion Kubasaki might be in a similar situation as Zama was a season ago. Though the Dragons possess a core of three established veterans, they're otherwise young, with five freshmen populating the roster.

Senior middle blocker Abby Robinson says for most teams, YUJO is a chance to bond as a team and get a chance to look at teams they'll be facing during their respective Far East tournaments Nov. 7-9, again at Humphreys.

"I can't wait to show what we have," Robinson said, adding that the growth that the Dragons made as a team this season is "amazing. We're here to do it again."

The coming weekend is also



DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Grace Bryant, Zama junior hitter and last year's Far East Division II Tournament Most Valuable Player, is hoping the Trojans can make some noise during this year's American School In Japan YUJO volleyball tournament.

the first of three district or league championship weekends in preparation for next month's Far East.

■ Yokota will host the DODEA-Japan cross country finals, with most of the meet run on the base's Par-3 golf course.

That precedes the 16th Asia-Pacific Invitational meet scheduled for Monday and Tuesday at Urayasu City's sports park next to the Tokyo Disney Resort. A handful of Nile C. Kinnick runners and one Yokota runner are entered, but as unattached entries since DODEA schools aren't running as official entrants.

Yokota also will host a weekend of inter-district tennis play, with Kadoma traveling north to engage in a Panthers vs. Panthers showdown. It will be the first time Kadoma faces a team other than Kubasaki this season.

And on the football fields, teams continue to jockey for places in the chase for Far East D-I and D-II title-game space.

Kadoma hosts Nile C. Kinnick and American School In Japan visits Humphreys, with the Panthers having already clinched a berth in the Nov. 9 D-I final and the other three still alive for a shot at 6 p.m. Kickoff is at both games is 6 p.m. Friday.

Meanwhile, in Division II, Matheu C. Perry visits Osan, with the Samurai hoping to stay unbeaten and the host Cougars trying to tighten the race for both playoff berths, which remain wide open. Kickoff is at 6 p.m. Saturday.

"I can't wait to show what we have," Robinson said, adding that the growth that the Dragons made as a team this season is "amazing. We're here to do it again."

The coming weekend is also



MARTIN EGASHA/Stars and Stripes

The DODEA Europe cross country championships Saturday will have no defending champions because St. John's was ruled ineligible for the meet.

With St. John's out, field is open for cross country meet

BY GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

There will be no defending champions to block the path at Saturday's DODEA Europe cross country championships.

DODEA Europe athletic director Cathlene Clemmons confirmed this week that St. John's, a Belgian-based international school that has participated in — and largely dominated, at least on the girls side — the event in recent seasons will not be in attendance Saturday at Baumholder, Germany.

St. John's did not appear in the handful of regular-season DODEA Europe meets for which it was scheduled due to what school athletic director Anthony Hennelly referred to last month as "calendar clashes." Under DODEA Europe rules, that disqualifies the school's runners from Saturday's final.

"Since St. John's was not able to compete in any of the DODEA Europe cross country events, they will have no runners at the European championships," Clemmons said.

That decision removes St. John's runner and 2018 individual girls champion Abby Michalec from the girls field. Michalec's win last year followed a three-year reign by former St. John's teammate Kayla Smith.

The boys race is also in search of a new champion

after the graduation of 2018 champion Dashiell Rogers of Ramstein.

The Stuttgart Panthers are targeting a win in both races.

Panther junior McKinley Fielding has absolutely dominated this fall. Her winning time of 19 minutes and 12 seconds Saturday was a full two and a half minutes ahead of the runner-up. Naples' Ariana Coats, Bahrain's Emily Rice, Ramstein's Nadia Rahaman, SHAPE's Greta Di Dio and Brussels' Shoshana Goldfein are among Fielding's primary challengers.

Stuttgart sophomore Landon McMinnity has emerged as a boys front-runner, winning last weekend's regular-season finale with a blistering time of 17:45. He'll battle Kaiserslautern's Griffen Parsells, Ramstein's Conner Mackie, Lakenheath's Matt Cavanaugh, SHAPE's Sam Dowdall, Bahrain's Alex Blakely and AOSR's William Davis, among others, for the title.

Stuttgart is also a top contender to claim the Division I team titles. Panther runners claimed six of the top seven spots in Saturday's race, an event that also included major large-school rivals Ramstein and Wiesbaden. The Panther girls took six of the top nine spots in their race.

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SHAPE, Naples fight for last playoff spot

BY GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

The loser of Saturday's football game between the SHAPE Spartans and Naples Wildcats will miss the playoffs. That makes the game itself a de facto playoff game.

SHAPE and Naples enter the final weekend of the DODEA Europe Division II regular season with winless conference records. Rota, Aviano and Vicenza have already qualified for the semifinals in the five-team league, leaving the fourth spot open for Saturday's winner between the Spartans and Wildcats.

Naples defeated Vicenza 26-6 in its opening-weekend game, but that first week didn't count towards playoff qualification. The Wildcats fell just short against their two in-country rivals in

the following weeks, losing 18-7 to Aviano and 18-6 in a rematch with Vicenza, before taking a 27-0 loss to unbeaten Rota.

Wildcats coach Jim Davis said he has seen "lots of positives moving forward" even as wins have proven elusive.

"We have been in most of our games," Davis said, adding that there is more parity in Division II this fall than in recent seasons. "The young players are feeling more confident as the season progresses and they are able to contribute more."

Adding to this weekend's intrigue is neither team has had a game in October.

The Wildcats had a scheduled bye Oct. 12 as the other four Division II contenders faced off. DODEA Europe sports observed a league-wide hiatus the weekend

of Oct. 5, a now annually scheduled break related to funding.

The Spartans, for the second straight year, were unable to fulfill their scheduled trip to Rota for that school's late-season homecoming game Oct. 12. SHAPE coach Scott Burgess said his team had just 14 players available that day, short of the 18 required by DODEA Europe for an 11-man football game, and therefore did not travel. Undefeated Rota was awarded the victory by forfeit, dropping the Spartans to 3-3.

But Burgess said his team is ready and "eager to play" its own homecoming game this weekend, and if things go well for the Spartans, a week or two more.

"We have enough athletes to field a team, even though several key players are out with injuries," Burgess said. "We will adapt."

MLB/COLLEGE FOOTBALL



MATT SLOCUM/AP

Yankees starting pitcher Luis Severino is taken out of the game by manager Aaron Boone during the fifth inning in Game 3 of the ALCS against the Houston Astros on Tuesday.

Rainout squeezes ALCS

Yankees' bullpen to be tested while Astros can rely on starters

By JAKE SEINER
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A rainy day in the Bronx has left a most daunting October test for the New York Yankees' vaunted bullpen: four games, four days and already a deficit to overcome against the Houston Astros in their AL Championship Series.

Game 4 of the ALCS scheduled for Wednesday night was postponed a day because of poor weather, and Game 5 was pushed to Friday night at Yankee Stadium. If necessary, Games 6 and 7 in Houston will be on Saturday and Sunday. The Astros beat New York 4-1 on Tuesday to take a 2-1 series lead.

The winner will face Washington and its well-rested, talented rotation starting in the AL city on Tuesday night.

With New York relying so heavily on its relievers this month, the starter-driven Astros may be at an advantage.

"If we're going to win this series, our bullpen will still play a huge role, obviously," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "But we've got to be able to get a little bit of distance out of our starters."

Houston announced Zack Greinke would pitch on Thursday against the Yankees' Masahiro Tanaka in a rematch of Game 1. Both are on regular rest. Tanaka pitched six stellar innings as New York won 7-0.

The Astros also announced that Justin Verlander will start Game 5 on full rest. He threw two-run ball into the seventh inning in a 3-2, 11-inning victory in Game 2 on Sunday.

"It was an easy decision," Astros manager AJ Hinch said.

New York plans to counter Verlander with James Paxton. The left-hander was pulled after allowing a run over 2 1/2 rocky innings in Game 2, and concerns were raised that he was tipping

his pitches.

Both clubs had planned to use openers Wednesday, and New York will almost certainly still use a bullpen day in the series, probably on Saturday in Game 6. Boone has hidden his relievers hard, asking them to cover 15 1/2 out of 28 innings in the series — a tough enough task with October's built-in days off. The rainout leaves Aroldis Chapman, Zack Britton and the rest of that group without some valuable recovery time.

Tanaka has been New York's best bet for length this postseason. He needed just 68 pitches to cover six innings in the opener, improving to 5-2 with a 1.32 ERA in the postseason.

The Astros may also lean heavily on relievers in Game 6, if necessary, although their bullpen strategy will differ from New York's. While the Yankees probably wouldn't ask any one pitcher for more than two or three innings, Houston could stretch starter Jose Urquidy over four or five innings after an opener. That could keep the rest of the club's arms fresher during this four-day run.

"How beneficial it is is probably easier to answer after I see how guys perform and how the pitching plays out," Hinch said of the rainout. "But like I said, it's kind of a wait and see."

The previous postseason game to be postponed was Game 4 of the 2017 NL Division Series between the Nationals and Cubs.

New crew

Mike Everett will replace Jeff Nelson as umpire crew chief for the remainder of the ALCS after Nelson was removed from Game 3 with a concussion. Nelson took two foul balls off his mask before Kerwin Danley swapped in behind home plate. Everett was the plate umpire for the NL wild-card game this season.

Scoreboard

Playoffs

x-if necessary

Washington vs. Milwaukee 3

Tampa Bay 2; Oakland 4

DIVISION SERIES

Best-of-five

American League

Houston 3, Tampa Bay 2

Houston 6, Tampa Bay 2

Houston 5, Tampa Bay 4

Tampa Bay 10, Houston 3

Tampa Bay 4, Houston 1

N.Y. Yankees 3, Minnesota 0

N.Y. Yankees 10, Minnesota 4

N.Y. Yankees 10, Minnesota 2

N.Y. Yankees 5, Minnesota 0

National League

Washington vs. St. Louis Dodgers 2

L.A. Dodgers 6, Washington 0

Washington 4, L.A. Dodgers 2

Washington 4, L.A. Dodgers 4

Washington 6, L.A. Dodgers 1

Washington 7, L.A. Dodgers 3, 10 innnings

St. Louis 3, Atlanta 2

St. Louis 7, Atlanta 6

Atlanta 3, St. Louis 0

Atlanta 3, St. Louis 1

St. Louis 5, Atlanta 4, 10 innnings

St. Louis 13, Atlanta 1

LEAGUE DIVISION SERIES

(Best-of-seven)

American League

Houston 3, N.Y. Yankees 1

New York 4, Houston 1

Houston 3, New York 2, 11 innnings

Houston 4, N.Y. Yankees 1

Wednesday, Oct. 23: Yankees, pfd.

Thursday, Oct. 24: Yankees, pfd.

Friday, Oct. 25: at Houston-N.Y. Yankees

Saturday, Oct. 26: at Houston-N.Y. Yankees

Sunday, Oct. 27: at Houston-N.Y. Yankees

World Series

(Best-of-seven)

Washington vs. Houston-N.Y. Yankees

Wednesday, Oct. 23: at Houston-N.Y. Yankees winner

Wednesday, Oct. 23: at Houston-N.Y. Yankees winner

Friday, Oct. 25: at Washington-N.Y. Yankees winner

Saturday, Oct. 26: at Washington-N.Y. Yankees winner

Sunday, Oct. 27: at Washington-N.Y. Yankees winner

x-Tuesday, Oct. 29: at Houston-N.Y. Yankees winner

x-Wednesday, Oct. 30: at Houston-N.Y. Yankees winner

Calendar

Nov. 11 — Rookies of the Year announced.

Nov. 12 — Managers of the Year announced.

Nov. 13 — Cy Young Awards announced.

Nov. 14 — Most Valuable Player awards announced.

Homebody heroes: SMU led by in-state transfers

By STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

'Having a chance to come back, I think, really has been special for a lot of these guys.'

Sonny Dykes
SMU football coach

sive analyst at TCU. He became SMU's coach in December 2017 after Chad Morris left for Arkansas, and his Mustangs debut came in a bowl game.

"Having a chance to come back, I think, really has been special for a lot of these guys," Dykes said.

There are 23 players overall on SMU's roster who were previously at other Division I schools. At least four of the seven grad transfers are eligible to play this year and next, including Buechele and Brandon Stephens, a running back UCLA and now a starting junior cornerback playing near his hometown of Plano.

"This is a great fit for me to come back and play corner and be back home," Stephens said. "The first day I even stepped on campus, I just saw something. These guys were hungry to just be great. ... It was eye-opening and inspiring to keep working and bring SMU back on the map."

SMU is 6-0 for the first time since 1982, the Pony Express days with Eric Dickerson and Craig James when the Mustangs went on to an 11-0-1 season. They had last been in the AP poll in October 1986, just before the NCAA death penalty punishments and not fielding a team in 1987 and 1988.

The players aren't the only ones feeling like they came home. Second-year coach Sonny Dykes is in a similar situation.

Dykes, the Texas-born son of the late Spike Dykes, was out of the Lone Star State for a decade before a short stint as an offensive



ROGER STEINMAN/AP

SMU quarterback Shane Buechele is the starting quarterback for an undefeated Top 25 team, like so many people envisioned when he started 12 games as a true freshman for Texas. Except Buechele is close to home after going to No. 19 SMU as a graduate transfer.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

6 scary matchups for playoff hopefuls

By LUKE MEREDITH
Associated Press

Except for South Carolina's stunning overtime victory at Georgia, there haven't been many results this season that figure to shape the College Football Playoffs standings.

Expect that to change before Halloween.

There are a slew of scary matchups for playoff hopefuls in the next two weeks, headlined by two Big Ten contests as Michigan heads to Penn State and Wisconsin travels to Ohio State.

Some of the games that should shake up the rankings between now and the end of October:

No. 16 Michigan at No. 7 Penn State, Saturday

The Nittany Lions (6-0, 3-0 Big Ten) proved they were for real in winning 17-12 at No. 23 Iowa last weekend, while Michigan's biggest victory also came against the Hawkeyes (10-3 two weeks ago). Penn State ranks second nationally in scoring defense at 8.2 points allowed per game, and the Wolverines (5-1, 3-1) scored only 24 points in their two games against ranked opponents Wisconsin and Iowa. A victory over Penn State in Happy Valley could vault Michigan back into the playoff discussion and a Nittany Lions' victory would solidify their postseason résumé.

No. 17 Arizona State at No. 13 Utah, Saturday

The Sun Devils (5-1, 2-1 Pac-12) have won two in a row after a surprising home loss to Colorado. The Utes (5-1, 2-1) have beaten Washington State and Oregon State by a combined score of 90-20. The winner of Saturday's game in Salt Lake City will become the clear favorite to emerge from the Pac-12 South.

No. 18 Baylor at Oklahoma State, Saturday

The undefeated Bears (6-0, 3-0 Big 12) might be the most surprising team in the country — although Texas Tech athletic director Kirby Hocutt said Big 12 officials acknowledged blowing an overtime call that helped Baylor get past the Red Raiders in double overtime. The Cowboys (4-2, 1-2) only lost by six at No. 15 Texas in September, and they knocked Kansas State out of the Top 25 the following week.

No. 11 Auburn at No. 2 LSU, Oct. 26

LSU (6-0, 2-0 SEC) has been arguably the best team in America this season. The Tigers have knocked off Texas and Florida and have scored at least 42 points in every game. Auburn (5-1,

2-1) has lost once and it was at Florida, 24-13. Look for star LSU quarterback Joe Burrow to try and exploit an Auburn defense that is giving up 235 yards passing per game, 79th out of 130 teams nationally.

No. 6 Wisconsin at No. 4 Ohio State, Oct. 26

Provided each team gets to this matchup unscathed, it will be a must-see game. Wisconsin (6-0, 3-0 Big Ten) has four shutouts in six games, and Jonathan Taylor is surely on the Heisman Trophy shortlist with 825 yards rushing and a nation-leading 14 touchdowns. Ohio State (6-0, 3-0), behind star quarterback Justin Fields, leads the Big Ten with 49.3 points per game while allowing only 8.4 — fourth-best in the country.



Wisconsin running back Jonathan Taylor has been running wild against the competition so far, but Ohio State awaits.

ANDY MANIS/AP

No. 15 Texas at TCU, Oct. 26

Texas (4-2, 2-1) has had to recalibrate expectations after falling out of the playoff hunt because of losses to LSU and Oklahoma. But a repeat of last year, when they won a New Year's Six game over Georgia in the Sugar Bowl, is still on the table for the talented, banged-up Longhorns. TCU (3-2, 1-1) hasn't been itself of late, allowing 49 points in a blowout loss at Iowa State. That said, the Horned Frogs were in the playoff hunt until just before Halloween as recently as two years ago, and freshman quarterback Max Duggan has the makings of a future star.

First half: Tigers' test, tackle's run, Tulane's trickery

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

The Southeastern Conference's West Division has the top two teams in the country in Alabama and LSU, defending national champion Clemson is right behind them and a host of others are lurking at the midway point of the season.

Jalen Hurts has made the most of his transfer to Oklahoma and become the Heisman Trophy front-runner. Joe Burrow has turned LSU into one of the hottest offenses going. Justin Fields has proved to be a smooth operator at Ohio State. And Auburn freshman Bo Nix introduced himself as the leader of the next wave of young quarterbacks.

Enough of the big picture stuff. Here's a look at the best snapshots from the season so far.

The great escape

Clemson nearly saw a 19-game winning streak end when North Carolina pushed the Tigers to the brink Sept. 28. The Tigers, ranked No. 1 at the time and 20-point favorites, were up 21-20 with 1:17 left after Javonte Williams scored for the Tar Heels. Mack Brown, in the first year of his second go-round at Carolina, decided to go for

two and the victory, but quarterback Sam Howell was stopped short on his option run. Clemson recovered the onside kick, ran out the clock — and breathed a sigh of relief.

One for the big fellas

Texas tackle Samuel Cosmi lived every offensive lineman's dream when he caught a lateral from Sam Ehlinger and rumbled 12 yards for a touchdown in a 42-31 victory over West Virginia on Oct. 5. Cosmi lined up in his usual spot at left tackle and, at the snap, took a few steps back while Ehlinger rolled right. As the Mountaineers' Reese Donahue closed in on Ehlinger, the quarterback flipped the ball left and backward to Cosmi. The 6-foot-7, 300-pound sophomore caught the ball, tucked it in his left arm and ran down the sideline, barreling into Darius Stills as he bulled his way into the end zone.

The fake knee

Tulane looked as if it would be content to go to overtime with its game against Houston tied 31-all on Sept. 19. Looks are deceiving. With the ball at the Tulane 29 and 18 seconds left in regulation, quarterback Justin McMillan took two quick

kneel-downs. On third down, McMillan faked a kneel-down, slipped the ball to tailback Amare Jones and ran right. Meanwhile, Jones took off left and picked up 18 yards. On the next play, McMillan threw a 53-yard touchdown pass to Jalen McClesky for the 38-31 victory.

Goal-line stand

California used a goal-line stand as time ran out to beat Mississippi 28-20 on Sept. 21, the Bears' first road victory over an SEC school since 1977 and the Pac-12's first since 2010. The Rebels started their final drive at their 10 with 2:45 left. Freshman backup quarterback John Rhys Plumlee completed six straight passes to get Ole Miss to the Cal 10. On fourth-and-goal inside the 1, senior linebacker Evan Weaver swooped in from the outside and stopped Plumlee on a sneak as the clock hit zeroes for the last and most important of his career-high 22 tackles.

Big comeback

UCLA rallied from a 32-point deficit in the middle of the third quarter to beat Washington State 67-63 on the road Sept. 21 in the highest-scoring Pac-12 game in history. Dorian Thompson-Robinson threw

for four touchdowns and ran for two others during the comeback, which saw the Bruins outscore WSU 50-17 in the final 19 minutes. UCLA capitalized on four WSU fumbles in the second half. In 2017, UCLA erased a 34-point deficit to beat Texas A&M 45-44. The largest Football Bowl Subdivision comeback was in 2006, when Michigan State beat Northwestern 41-38 after trailing 38-3 in the third quarter.

King for a day

Perhaps the best feel-good story, eventually tempered by a social media flap, came off the field with 23-year-old Iowa State fan Carson King raising almost \$3 million for the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital. King attended ESPN's "College GameDay" show in Ames, Iowa, on Sept. 14 and held up a handmade sign reading "Busch Light Supply Needs Replenished." The handle for his Venmo mobile payment account was included. Donations far exceeding his expectations came in, and he decided to send the money to the hospital. All was well and good until a Des Moines Register reporter discovered racist tweets King sent as a high school sophomore, prompting King to apologize. The reporter was fired when he also was found to have sent racist tweets.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

TOP 25 SCHEDULE

Friday's games

No. 4 Ohio State at Northwestern
 No. 10 Michigan vs. Penn State
 No. 1 Alabama vs. Tennessee
 No. 2 LSU at Mississippi State
 No. 3 Florida at Georgia
 No. 5 Oklahoma vs. West Virginia
 No. 6 Wisconsin at Illinois
 No. 7 Michigan State vs. Michigan
 No. 9 Florida at South Carolina
 No. 10 Georgia vs. Kentucky
 No. 11 Michigan vs. Michigan State
 No. 12 Oregon at No. 25 Washington
 No. 13 Utah vs. No. 17 Arizona State
 No. 14 Boise State at BYU
 No. 15 UCF vs. Kentucky
 No. 18 Baylor at Oklahoma State
 No. 19 Florida vs. Temple
 No. 20 Minnesota vs. Rutgers
 No. 21 Cincinnati vs. Tulsa
 No. 22 Missouri at Vanderbilt
 No. 23 Iowa vs. Purdue
 No. 24 Appalachian State vs. Louisiana-Monroe

SERVICE ACADEMIES

Air Force (4-2)
 at Hawaii (4-2), Saturday
 Last week: Beat Fresno State 43-24

Navy (3-3)
 at Georgia State (4-2), Saturday
 Last week: Lost to W. Kentucky 17-8

Navy (4-1)
 vs. South Florida (3-3), Saturday
 Last week: Beat Tulsa 45-17

POWER FIVE STANDINGS

	ACC		Atlantic Division		Overall
	W	L	W	L	
Clemson	4	0	5	2	9-2
Louisville	2	2	4	3	3-5
Florida State	2	2	3	3	3-5
Northwest.	1	1	4	2	3-3
NC State	1	2	4	2	3-3
Boston College	1	2	3	3	3-3
Syracuse	1	2	4	2	3-3
Coastal Division					
Duke	2	1	4	2	3-3
UNC	2	1	4	2	3-3
North Carolina	2	1	3	3	3-3
Pittsburgh	1	2	4	2	3-3
Virginia Tech	1	2	4	2	3-3
Miami	1	2	3	3	3-3
Georgia Tech	0	3	1	5	1-5
Big 12 Conference					
Baylor	5	0	6	0	11-0
Oklahoma State	3	0	5	0	8-0
Texas	2	1	4	2	3-3
Oklahoma	1	1	3	2	3-2
Texas Tech	1	2	3	2	3-2
West Virginia	1	2	3	2	3-2
Kansas State	0	3	4	2	4-2
Kansas	0	3	2	4	2-4
Big Ten East Conference					
Ohio State	5	0	6	0	11-0
Penn State	3	0	6	0	8-0
Michigan	3	1	5	1	8-2
Michigan State	1	2	4	2	3-3
Indiana	1	2	4	2	3-3
Maryland	0	2	1	5	1-5
West					
Minnesota	3	0	6	0	9-0
Wisconsin	3	0	6	0	9-0
Nebraska	2	2	4	3	3-3
Iowa	1	2	3	2	3-2
Purdue	0	3	2	4	2-4
Illinois	0	3	2	4	2-4
Northwestern	0	3	1	4	1-4
Pac-12 North Conference					
Oregon	3	0	5	1	8-1
Washington	2	2	4	2	3-3
Stanford	2	2	3	2	3-2
California	1	2	4	2	3-2
Oregon State	1	2	4	2	3-2
Washington State	0	3	3	3	3-3
South					
Arizona	2	1	5	1	6-1
Utah	2	1	5	1	6-1
Arizona	2	1	5	1	6-1
South Cal	1	2	3	2	3-2
Colorado	1	2	3	2	3-2
UCLA	1	2	3	2	3-2
SEC East Conference					
Missouri	2	0	5	1	6-1
Fordham	2	2	3	2	3-2
Georgia	2	2	3	2	3-2
South Carolina	2	2	3	2	3-2
Tennessee	1	3	2	4	3-4
Kentucky	1	3	2	4	3-4
Vanderbilt	0	3	1	5	1-5
West					
Alabama	3	0	6	0	9-0
LSU	2	0	6	0	9-0
Auburn	2	2	3	2	3-2
Mississippi	2	2	3	2	3-2
Mississippi State	1	2	3	2	3-2
Texas A&M	0	3	2	4	2-4
Arkansas	0	3	2	4	2-4



MATTHEW PUTNEY/AP

Penn State running back Noah Cain gets past Iowa linebacker Djimon Colbert for a touchdown during the second half last Saturday in Iowa City, Iowa. Cain has posted two straight 100-yard rushing games for the Nittany Lions.

KEY POWER FIVE MATCHUPS

No. 3 Clemson (6-0)
 at Louisville (4-2)
 6 p.m. Saturday CET
 2 a.m. Sunday JKT
 AFN-Sports

No. 2 LSU (6-0)
 at Mississippi State (3-3)
 9:30 p.m. Saturday CET
 4:30 a.m. Sunday JKT
 AFN-Sports

No. 16 Michigan (5-1)
 at No. 7 Penn State (6-0)
 1:30 a.m. Sunday CET
 8:30 a.m. Sunday JKT
 AFN-Atlantic

Series record — Clemson leads 5-0.

What's at stake?

Clemson seeks its 22nd consecutive victory and firmer control of the ACC Atlantic Division while remaining unbeaten against the Cardinals. Fresh off winning a second consecutive shootout in play league, the improving Cardinals aim to finally give first-year coach Scott Satterfield his second win in a row over a ranked school.

Key matchup — Clemson's offense vs. Louisville's defense. Tigers QB Trevor Lawrence (1,301 yards, 11 TDs) and RB Travis Etienne (589, five) get another crack at the Cardinals after combining for four touchdowns in last year's 77-16 home shellacking. That duo hasn't missed a beat this season and leads the ACC's No. 2 offense in several offensive categories, including yards per game at 497. The Cardinals are 12th in the ACC in total defense (439 yards allowed) and scoring D (31.5).

Players to watch — Clemson: LB Isaiah Simmons. The Tigers lead the ACC in total defense (254.8) and pass defense (150.3) thanks to the junior who has team bests of 46 tackles and four sacks. He returned an interception 27 yards for TD in last year's meeting.

Louisville: WR Dez Fitzpatrick. Since going without a reception in a victory over Western Kentucky, the junior has 17 catches for 366 yards and four touchdowns the past three games. His total includes 125 yards and two TDs on five catches at Wake Forest, making Fitzpatrick is the first receiver since DeVante Parker with three consecutive 100-yard efforts.

Facts & figures — Clemson has won both previous visits to Louisville, including 47-21 in 2017. ... The Tigers seek their 16th consecutive ACC regular-season win for the second time and first since winning 20 in a row from 1981-84. ... Louisville is in a race in ACC offense (40.9 yards per game) and scoring (37.3).

Series record — LSU leads 74-35-3.

What's at stake?

LSU is seeking to remain unbeaten and earn its first 6-0 start since 2015. Mississippi State is trying to snap a two-game skid and avoid falling below .500.

Key matchup — Mississippi State running back Kyle Hill vs. LSU's run defense. LSU averages 52.5 points per game as the nation's highest-scoring team, so Mississippi State's best chance of staying competitive is to control the clock and keep the Tigers' offense on the sidelines. Hill rushed for over 100 yards in each of Mississippi State's first four games but has been held below 50 yards in each of the Bulldogs' last two contests. LSU is allowing just 91.8 yards rushing per game.

Players to watch — LSU: CB Derek Stingley Jr. Although quarterback Joe Burrow and the high-powered LSU offense justifiably have garnered much of the attention during the Tigers' fast start, Stingley is having a huge year. The freshman has intercepted a pass in three straight games and ranks third among all football Bowl Subdivision players in passes defensed.

Mississippi State: QB Garrett Shrader. After backing up Penn State graduate transfer Tommy Stevens for most of the season, Shrader is expected to start Saturday. Shrader, a freshman dual-threat quarterback, already has played quite a bit and has run for 374 yards while averaging 6.3 yards per carry.

Facts & figures — LSU leads the nation in scoring and ranks second in total offense, and third-down conversion percentage. ... Burrow leads the nation in passing efficiency and completion percentage. ... The last time these two teams faced each other at Mississippi State, the Bulldogs won 37-7 in 2017 for their most lopsided victory in the series. ... Mississippi State has forced a turnover in 22 straight games, the longest active streak of any FBS team.

Series record — Michigan leads 14-8.

What's at stake?

One of just two unbeatens left in the Big Ten East, No. 7 Penn State can earn some cushion with a signature win at home. Meanwhile, the No. 16 Wolverines will try to stay in the hunt for the division crown by winning their second in a row in the series.

Key matchup — Penn State's defensive line vs. Michigan's defensive line. These two units obviously won't meet head-to-head, but this game could easily turn into a competition between both defensive fronts. The Nittany Lions are second in the country with 27 sacks, while the Wolverines have posted 16 in the last three games.

Players to watch — Michigan: QB Shea Patterson. The Wolverines' signal-caller has been a turnover machine with four fumbles lost and three interceptions so far. He'll need to be better against the nation's fourth-ranked total defense that's allowing just eight points per game.

Penn State: QB Sean Clifford. The junior got off to a shaky start against Iowa, holding the ball too long and taking unnecessary hits. He settled in nicely, however, and finished as the second-leading rusher. His running abilities could come in handy again against Michigan's aggressive front seven.

Facts & figures — Penn State is allowing just 1.59 yards per carry and has surrendered only one rushing touchdown this season. ... Penn State RB Noah Cain posted his second straight 100-yard rushing game last week. ... Michigan posted a season-best 295 rushing yards last week. ... Michigan's first-year offensive coordinator Josh Gattis was Penn State's wide receivers coach and passing game coordinator from 2014-17. Jim Harbaugh is 1-6 against ranked teams on the road in five seasons as Michigan's coach.

— Associated Press

NFL

49ers take hot start in stride

San Francisco staying grounded after first 5-0 start in 29 years

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — For a franchise that has had little success the past few seasons, the San Francisco 49ers are sure taking their fast start this season in stride.

The Niners have won their first five games for the first time in 29 years and are one of two remaining undefeated teams in the NFL along with the defending Super Bowl champion New England Patriots.

"It's cool to be 5-0. But I know it's nothing," safety Jimmie Ward said Wednesday. "I've been through seasons, I've been through injuries, so I know 5-0 is not where I want to be at. It's cool. It's impressive I guess for the people outside in the world. Inside this locker room, it's nothing; 5-0 doesn't get you anything, 5-0 doesn't get you a ring."

But 5-0 is a dramatic turnaround from where this franchise has been. Since making it to three straight NFC championship games and one Super Bowl from 2011 to 2013 under coach Jim Harbaugh, San Francisco hasn't had a winning record.

The 49ers went 8-8 in Harbaugh's final season in 2014 and have fallen even further since he was forced out after that season. The team won five games in Jim Tomsula's only season as coach in 2015, while 2-14 the following year under Chip Kelly and then posted a combined 10-22 record in the first two seasons under coach

'It's impressive I guess for the people outside in the world. Inside this locker room, it's nothing; 5-0 doesn't get you anything, 5-0 doesn't get you a ring.'

Jimmie Ward

San Francisco 49ers safety

Kyle Shanahan.

Now with a vastly improved defense fortified by edge rushers Nick Bosa and Dee Ford and an offense that features a dynamic running game to go along with a healthy Jimmy Garoppolo at quarterback, the Niners once again look like contenders in the NFC.

The defense is the tops in the league against the pass and second overall in terms of scoring and total defense. The running game is the second-most productive and San Francisco is outscoring opponents by 16.6 points per game, second best in the league.

"Things are trending in the right direction," Garoppolo said. "I think as an offense you try to assess yourself week to week after the game, what you did good, what you did bad and try to improve those things going forward and not really have any weaknesses. So, that's what we're trying to do."

San Francisco is coming off perhaps its most impressive seven-day stretch in years, having beaten Cleveland 31-3 at home on "Monday Night Football" on Oct.

7 and then following it up six days later with a 20-7 win in Los Angeles against the defending NFC champion Rams. San Francisco allowed only 157 yards against LA.

Despite that recent success, Shanahan spent part of the film session before practice Wednesday showing some of the bad plays against the Rams in an effort to keep his players grounded.

"I did it today because I showed a lot of good things Monday," he said. "We enjoyed the win and there were a lot of good things. But you can watch that in a different light and find a lot of bad things, too. It's nice when people tell you how good you are and stuff. It makes people, all human beings, feel better. Those are also the same people who will tell you how bad you are if the ball bounces the wrong way. You can watch that game in a different light and see it's three plays away from getting out of hand going the other way. So you always want to put that perspective back in the players' minds so you never relax. If you relax in this league, you'll be humbled."



JOHN LOCHER/AP

49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo (10) celebrates after scoring a rushing touchdown against the Rams on Sunday in Los Angeles. San Francisco's running game is the second-most productive in the league, and the 49ers are outscoring opponents by 16.6 points per game, also second best in the NFL.

Goodell: Pass interference reviews working as expected

By STEVEN WINE
Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — NFL commissioner Roger Goodell says the new video review rule for pass interference is working as expected, with only obvious mistakes by officials being corrected.

Through Week 6, the league has had 44 reviews related to pass interference, and the on-field ruling was reversed seven times.

"I think coaches understood replay was going to correct every pass interference close call," Goodell said Wednesday at the close of the two-day owners' meetings. "It's not possible to make it perfect, and we're not reofficiating these plays. The thought process was to correct the obvious and clear error. I think it's settling out where we expected."

The new rule approved as a one-year experiment allows pass interference calls or non-calls to be challenged by coaches and reviewed via replay. But complaints by coaches, players and fans about pass interference persist, with some arguing more calls should be reversed.

When the rule was adopted last spring, Goodell said, coaches un-



WILFREDO LEE/AP

Commissioner Roger Goodell speaks after the NFL fall league meeting on Wednesday in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

derstood that close calls wouldn't be changed. The reversal rate so far is 16 percent.

"Whenever there's a period of adapting, and coaches are testing to see what types of changes are going to be made," Goodell said.

Rick McKay, Atlanta Falcons

president and a member of the NFL competition committee, said it's too early to judge whether interference reviews are being handled properly. But he agreed with Goodell that the goal was to reverse only egregious mistakes.

"It's got to be an obvious error," McKay said. "It's a brand-new

rule, one our coaches, players, fans and officials are getting accustomed to."

Officiating has been a hot topic this season, with controversy about pass interference, the rate of holding penalties and, most recently, a critical call in Monday's Lions-Packers game that the league admitted was wrong.

The erroneous hands-to-the-face flag tainted Green Bay's 23-22 win, but Goodell said such controversy is part of any sport.

"You never want to see a game where people are talking about officials afterward," Goodell said. "It was a great game played by two great teams surprising people about the way they're playing. And it's tough. We have to continue to do everything to improve."

"But that's sports. You see it in every sport."

On other topics, the commissioner said:

■ Labor discussions on a new collective bargaining agreement have touched on the possible expansion to a 17-game season. The Super Bowl would be one week later, and the season would still start the week after Labor Day. Larger rosters might accompany a longer season.

Goodell said the CBA talks have

been productive, but he declined to predict when a deal might be reached.

■ Despite the Miami Dolphins' historically bad start during a rebuilding effort, Goodell said he's not concerned about teams sacrificing a season for a high draft pick and diminishing the NFL's competitiveness.

"The good news for us is we don't see that," he said. "I don't think the league has ever been more competitive. You can see that in teams going from last to first in dramatic fashion."

Goodell said he doesn't believe competitiveness would be improved by a lottery for draft picks, and such a change hasn't been proposed by owners.

■ The league will examine possible reasons for a 44% increase in concussions in exhibition games from 2018 to this year. Concussions in preseason practices fell by 33%.

"We can look at the video, we can look at the medical information and try to understand the exact circumstances and see if there's a trend or something we need further changes on — whether it's preseason policies or techniques we want to remove from the game," Goodell said.

NFL



New Orleans Saints (5-1)
at Chicago Bears (3-2)

AFN-Atlantic

10 p.m. Sunday CET, 5 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Saints lead 15-13.

Last meeting: Saints beat Bears 20-12, Oct. 29, 2017.

Notes: Saints have won the past four in a row in the series.... Saints QB Teddy Bridgewater completed 24 of 36 passes for 240 yards and a TD for a 94.7 rating in Week 6. He is 4-0 as a starter this year through his first five starts.... Bears' three starts against the Bears. CB Marlon Humphrey had three pass deflections and an interception last week. LB Demario Davis had 11 tackles in his only career game against the Bears.... Bears rookie RB David Montgomery had his second career rushing TD in Week 5. WR Allen Robinson led the Bears with 7 receptions for 97 yards and 2 TDs in Week 5. He aims for his third game in a row with 7-plus catches and 75-plus receiving yards. QB Mitchell Trubisky is 8-2 with 19 TDs against 10 interceptions for a 91.8 rating in his past 10 starts at home.



Houston Texans (4-2)
at Indianapolis Colts (3-2)

AFN-Atlantic

7 p.m. Sunday CET, 2 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Colts lead 24-8.

Last meeting: Colts beat Texans 24-21, Dec. 9, 2018.

Notes: Colts have won 3 of the past 4 in the series. Colts QB Jacoby Brissett passed for 151 yards and rushed for a TD in Week 5 and aims for his third game in a row with 250-plus passing yards and 2-plus passing TDs. RB Marlon Humphrey had 122 yards in Week 5, RB Nyheim Hines had 4 touches for a team-high 76 yards in Week 5. Had 9 catches for 63 yards and a career-high 2 TD catches in his last home meeting. Texans QB Deshaun Watson passed for 280 yards with a TD and 2 interceptions and rushed for 42 yards and 2 TDs last week. Reached 7,500 career passing yards in 2nd-fewest games (29) in NFL history. DE J.J. Watt had a sack in 3 of his past 4 games and is looking for his third sack game in a row. S Tashaun Gipson is looking for his third game in a row with an interception.

Game capsules compiled from nflcommunications.com

Source: NFL Media

American Conference

East

West

North

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North

SPORTS



Staying grounded

49ers taking 5-0 start
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NBA

Take two

Trend of Big Threes gives way to dynamic duos around league

BY BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

In today's high-stakes NBA, a powerful pair beats three of a kind.

Teams who longed to build a Big Three are now striving for a dynamic duo, hoping two premier players are good enough to win a championship when the belief used to that it required a trio.

And with some of the combinations assembled this summer, it sure seems less is more.

That's certainly the thinking in Los Angeles, where LeBron James and Anthony Davis will try to power the Lakers back to the playoffs, and Kawhi Leonard and Paul George attempt to carry the Clippers further than they've ever gone before.

Houston is putting James Harden and Russell Westbrook together in a backcourt of recent MVPs, and Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant made the Nets the talk of not only New York but also the entire NBA on the opening day of free agency when they decided to partner up in Brooklyn.

"Everybody was looking for a Big Three," George said. "It didn't work for a lot of

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Pictured clockwise from left:
The Houston Rockets' James Harden and Russell Westbrook;
The Los Angeles Lakers' Anthony Davis and LeBron James; and the Los Angeles Clippers' Paul George and Kawhi Leonard.

AP photos



Big games loom for playoff hopefuls » College football, Page 60

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